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Summary: Instead of the man with the gun, Eleven meets someone else in the forest the days prior to Hopper finding her. Someone dark. The girl has abilities, but not like her. There's something different about the woman who drinks blood and fight's her own bad men. Eleven doesn't question it though... because for once; she finds someone who doesn't make her feel like an absolute freak.

1. Chapter 1: Alone

A/N: Hello friends! SO... I decided to start a new fanfiction. I apologize to those that follow me and haven't heard back from my other stories. I'm not abandoning them, I promise.

This story takes places in Season 2 of Stranger Things. Basically, it's what happens when the multidimensional science side of stranger things meets the supernatural. Since i haven't seen anyone really do this yet before, I thought I'd start. I know some people will hate it... but hey. They don't have to read it. The main synopsis for it will be the events leading up to the first episode of Season 2, and on from there. My OC will be helping Eleven and Hopper sort out there dysfunctional family. MY OC, Naomi, will help teach Eleven things while also struggling to maintain the humanity in herself. There will be a lot of flashbacks for Naomi, talking about her past and how she came to be, which I dipped my toes into this first chapter. the three of them will experience things together like Christmas, fourth of July, El's first storm, and other stuff like , what happened that year that she was with Hopper, but with another person. In this first chapter, I feel as if I had to write my character as week in order to be in the circumstance she ends up in later on, but I promise she's a bad ass. Anyways... I hope you enjoy as I put a lot of work into the first chapter, and I'd love to hear your thought's and ideas.

P.S

I also love the Winchester's, and they heavily inspired my Character's 'bad men'.

Running from a murderous duo of hunter's wasn't exactly how Naomi preferred to spend her Friday nights. She had really been enjoying the abandoned motel she was staying at, as well. That was... until the Winchester's sucked it into their black hole of death. Like everything else, in her life. She ran with the clothes on her back, a few wads of bills in her left pocket, and a small pack with two liters of A- blood in it.

She envied how accessible it was for humans to get food. Not her, though. She had to kill to get what she wanted. She hadn't lately, though. She vowed to at least try to keep as many people alive as possible. That was the only way she could live. Although, that vow didn't seem to stop the hunters from getting on her ass.

She didn't want to kill. She didn't particularly enjoy killing... It was what her coven had done. What her coven had made her do. Her brother was in that coven, and that was the only thing that kept her around. That, and Jasper's threats.

Vampire's weren't like werewolves. Everyone was equal, where as werewolf pack's had an alpha, a beta. Not this coven, though. Jasper had turned everyone. He had started with a group of females, and then a group of male's. Her brother, was one of those male's. They said twins had a special bond. Especially in the 80's. When they were younger, they came up with our own gibberish code so their mother couldn't understand what they were saying. They were two peas in a pod. Inseperable...

Until Jasper got him.

He was turned 6 months before her.

She didn't know what to think of it, at first. After her mother's decease, she had left the apartment in Naomi's name, being the slightly older twin. Theo had started coming home late. He was irritable, didn't like the lights on. She'd cook him food. Breakfast, lunch, dinner. He hadn't touched a single bite of it in three days. The flies were starting to buzz around in his room. Naomi could hear it from her room, across the hall.

He was out almost all the time.

It wasn't like him to be so... distant from her. They were twins, after all.

They didn't have secrets. They shared everything. She thought it was a phase. The stress of college finally hitting him. That was... until she found out he hadn't shown up to his classes in nearly a week.

She had gave him a week. Seven days to sort himself out. It must have been drugs, right? She had accused him of every drug under the sun, but he denies it all; and she trusted him. She trusted what he said, but knew there was something else. It was their trust of being twins, that, and the smell of marijuana, or booze, never seemed to follow him inside those late fateful nights.

That, was the first time she had cried since her father had left. She hadn't even felt tears when her mother got sucked into her illness. She had had cancer for a long time. It was never easy watching a parent pass, but it was expected for her mother.

She remembered distinctly curling up into a fetal position, hearing her brother in the other room, animalistic snarls sounding from underneath the door frame.

She felt like she was losing him.

The next night, her brother had confronted her.

Theo took her to the barn in the woods. She hadn't even known it was there. Her first thought was that he had joined some kind of cult. She saw the group of twelve, or so, standing around the giant fire, blood dripping from every orifice. They all turned to look at her as Theo swung open the creaky barn doors. Despite being a minute or two older, she hid herself behind dear Theodore. He has reassured it was okay, that these people would help her. That he wouldn't have to lie to her anymore. They could be free. Be free of struggling, be free of living paycheque to paycheque, and be free of a normal life, one they never had in the first place though.

She wish she hadn't trusted him.

The second she saw the red eyes take over Jasper's irises like an oil spill in water, she knew she had made a terrible mistake in accepting her brother's request to join them.

But it was too late.

Two years later, she found herself running from one of the most powerful hunter's she had ever heard of. Brothers. Sebastian and

James Winchester.

She didn't want to think in detail, not in a time like this. All she could recall was the death of her coven, her brother. That was the second time she remembered crying. Not just sad tears. Rage tears. Angry tears, as besides her; Jasper was the only other vampire that had made it out alive from the bloody massacre.

Another year later, here she was. No love left in her heart, just a pit of rage. The two hunters on her ass, and Jasper nowhere to be found.

She had also envied those who trusted so easily. She envied a lot of things. She wanted to find love in her heart again, but she lost everything. The crushing remorse and shame she felt of killing as a fledgling was too consuming. Every time she had faced a human in the eyes, she imagined them dead, her teeth between their neck. The bloodlust was too powerful. She had learned to control it now, yes, but not without a few slip ups.

That was why she made frequent trips to the hospital. The guilt of stealing blood bags waiting to be donated was a lot more minuscule.

It was very rare a vampire lived like this, drinking refrigerated bags of B- instead of tapping into someone's jugular, feeling the warm liquid pass through their teeth, meeting their cold lips before draining down their throat.

She wasn't nearly as strong by doing this, but she was still stronger than most of her species. She took no shit from anyone of the supernatural, nor anyone human for that matter either.

Long story short, that was how she ended up wandering through the light snowfall, hearing her feet crunch into the fresh blanket of the forest floor. She was in Indiana, now. Hawkins was the last signs she had recalled seeing. She didn't know why, but she shivered as soon as she had passed the imaginary barrier of Hawkin's entrance. It wasn't from the cold, either. She didn't get cold. She was dead, after all.

She shivered again, thinking about her merciless death required to give her eternal life.

Dusk had just fallen over the quiet town, and the only noise was her combat boots stepping on the small twigs beneath her.

The sound of snow falling was eerie. You couldn't really hear it, but you could sense it.

She stood for a moment, doing a full 360 as the last of the light vanished over the horizon. She opened her ears, closing her eyes as that pronounced the other sense. She heard someone else in the woods, far. The scent was unfamiliar though. She ignored it, listening more. The next thing she heard was a deer. She passed quickly over to the road. She winced when she heard the familiar noise of a 1967 chevy impala.

The Winchester's

She grabbed the hair tie from her wrist and pulled her hair into a low pony. She shrugged the hood of the leather jacket over her forehead, tightening her strings, and then ran.

Running as a vampire wasn't like normal running. She flew, her toes barely touching the ground. She ran a mile a minute. Her ponytail whipped around her face, her cheeks stinging from the cold breeze. If any human were to see her, she'd be a blur. She whizzed past the foliage for another five minutes or so, keeping up the same speed

When she stopped, she sat. Even crossed her legs, despite the wet snow soaking into her thin ripped jeans.

She was deep into the middle of the forest now, not hugging the road. The brothers would have to be on foot to find her now.

She pulled out the pack of smokes from her pocket, placing one between her full lips. One hand covered it from the light wind, while the other lit the smoke.

She breathed in a puff, exhaling loosely, attempting to rid her worries. She didn't particularly like being this alone. She liked being alone, but not dead in the middle of the forest, pitch black, no one to be seen, alone.

She took another drag. It helped her cravings, the tobacco. That, and

booze (particularly whiskey). It helped the blood lust.

She started to pile a group of twigs together. She could stay here tonight. Lots of foliage from the bushes and the trees. Even a log to sleep on. She didn't need the warmth of the fire, but she wanted it. It would make her feel less alone. Nor did she need the light, as her night vision as a vampire was perfectly fine; but it comforted her. She had two blood bags left in her pack, enough to last her a week. She'd have to raid the nearest hospital as soon as she could.

She took the last drag of her cigarette, dropping the butt to the floor, and squishing it with her boots.

She heard a small crack of a twig, and it took a moment for her to fathom whether that was her feet... or someone else. She hadn't lit the fire yet. It couldn't be that.

She coughed a little, the smoke caught in her throat. She used her abilities to see in front of her. She couldn't see anyone. Not even an animal. She turned ever so slightly to the left. Nada.

She heard another crack. Her head whipped to the left. Nothing there.

She coughed again. "Hello?" If her heart could beat, it sure would now. Her nostrils flared as she tried to catch a scent. It smelled... human. It smelled like freshly washed laundry.... And dirt. At the same time, if that made sense. She smelt a little floral in there as well. The scent of damp clothes was too overpowering, though.

Another twig snapped, and she slowly turned around to see someone behind her.

Her eyes were wide, her mouth hanging open. It was a small someone, but a someone. She was tiny. She was young. Twelve, thirteen maybe. Her hair was in a short pixie cut, messily strewn back. She wore a distressed pink dress. She wore striped tube socks that were unevenly pulled up, and sneakers. She had a plaid shirt on, as well, but it was soaked from the snow.

They stood, staring at each other for a moment. Naomi noticed the

smallest amount of dried blood underneath the girl's left nostril, and held her breath.

Her eyes drifted from the doe brown eyes, to her chapped lips. From her lips, to her blue hands, and from her blue hands, to her trembling knees. She was cold. Her heartbeat was slow, worryingly slow. The girl was freezing to death.

"Are you lost sweetheart?" Naomi broke the silence, licking her lips and trying to ignore the dried blood under her nose.

The girl slowly shook her head, clenching her fists.

"U-Umm.. Are you looking for your mom? Your dad?"

Again, she shook her head.

"Are you cold?"

She nodded, her thick eyebrows falling.

Naomi didn't know what to make of the situation. This girl felt... different. Naomi stood from her seat on the log, and took the first step towards the girl.

The girl flinched.

She felt bad for scaring her, and that wasn't often something she felt bad for.

"Do you remember your name?" Naomi whispered softly, taking another step closer, trying not to scare the girl.

The girl nodded.

Naomi took another step. "I won't hurt you, hun. I promise. Do you want to tell me what your name is?"

It was the first time she had broken eye contact. She was contemplating what to do.

Naomi closed the space between them by taking the last step.

"Promise?"

Naomi was so dumbfounded that the girl finally had spoken that she had forgotten to reply. "A-Wha?"

"Promise. It's something friends keep." Naomi listened to the quiet melodious voice of the girl in front of her. For some reason; she wanted to help her. Help wasn't something she did a lot. Not lately, anyways. "Promise you won't hurt?"

"I know what a promise is," Naomi shook her head. "Y-Yes. I promise." Naomi knelt down, looking up at the girl. She placed a hand on her shoulder, and she flinched again but softened after. She could tell just by touch, that this girl had been through a lot.

She saw the small crystals of ice forming underneath her nose, and the frosted tips of her hair curl together.

"Do you want to tell me what your name is?" She repeated again.

The girl clenched her jaw, nodding again. She held out her wrist, bumping Naomi with it.

She was confused for a moment, but took the girl's wrist. She placed one hand underneath her elbow, and the other shoved her sleeve up.

Three small numbers were tattooed into her pallid skin.

011

"Eleven," She spoke softly, turning to face the girl again. "That's your name?"

The girl nodded.

"Aren't you a little young to have a tattoo?" Naomi furrowed her brows.

The girl did it back. "Tattoo?"

"It's a— never mind. Boy your parents must have been real stupid to tattoo your name on you. They forget or something?"

"Parents." It wasn't a question, it was a statement. Like she was testing out the words.

"Yes, parents." This encounter was getting weirder and weirder by the moment, and she had met several weirdos of the supernatural before.

"Parents." She said again.

"Look, sweetie," Naomi frustratingly ran a hand through her hair, pushing the sleeve down again. "Do you know where you are? Where you're going?"

"Yes and no."

"Yes and no." Naomi frowned, mimicking Eleven. "Great."

Eleven nodded.

Naomi groaned. "Well kid, you're *not* in luck. Looks like you're stuck with me for the night. Sound good?" She started walking away from Eleven, towards the fire she had started to make. She should light it before the wood got too wet.

"Good." Eleven replied behind her, following Naomi to the log .

"You're too far from home for me to make it back to the tree line on foot. We'd be walking till dawn. Besides, you look like a walking corpse anyways." She glanced back at the girl, who seemed confused. She forced the look of annoyance on her face, glaring up at Naomi.

Naomi snickered.

"Name's Naomi. Not the most normal name in this day, I know."

Eleven listened with open ears, nodding at the girl.

Naomi pointed to the log, "Sit."

Eleven nodded, "Sit."

"Do you always repeat everything?" Naomi cocked a brow, looking at her as she knelt down to the tepee of wood.

"Repeat?" Eleven rubbed her blue hands together.

"Yes. Repeat. It's like a cycle, you know, like doesn't change. The same every time."

"Hmm." Was all she muttered, curling up into a fetal position on the wet bark.

The girl was tired, she could tell that from the bags under her eyes. She could also tell the girl was thin, thinner than she should have been. She needed food, one thing she couldn't provide.

It took a few tries, but Naomi managed to light the fire with her silver zippo. She replaced the empty spot beside Eleven, and sat by her, watching the cascade of orange flames grow; dancing in front of scooted closer to the fire, her butt on the very edge of the log.

"You must be cold, hey?"

Eleven nodded. "Very cold"

Naomi shrugged off her jacket, wrapping it around the distressed plaid shirt, and placing it over her thin shoulders. Eleven curled up into it- shutting her eyes as if she felt instant relief from the heavily used jacket.

Naomi curled her fingers underneath her turtleneck, slipping it off her thin frame, and placed it atop of eleven, like a blanket; leaving Naomi in only a racerback tank top.

"Are you not... cold?" It confused Eleven, clearly, to see the lady in front of her so bare, and to not shiver, even as the snow touched her skin. What was odd to Eleven, was that when the snow touched her exposed collarbones, it didn't melt, like it did when it touched Eleven's face. Or her hands. Or anywhere.

Every so often, Naomi would wipe the snow off that started to pool together in places like the indent of her collar bones, her lap, underneath her eyes— since it didn't melt off.

"I don't get cold, kid." Naomi gave the girl a weak smile, knocking on her own flesh on her arm, "Tough skin."

Eleven's lips quirked up. "Tough skin," she reiterated once again, her left corner of her mouth barely quirked up. Eleven knew that Naomi's explanation had more underlying meaning- but she didn't push it. She was too exhausted to barely speak.

There was a moment, there, where Eleven had almost dozed off mid conversation, but she woke herself up. She didn't retreat from her half-asleep position in Naomi's side, though. She curled into her. Naomi wrapped only one arm around Eleven, knowing that if she hugged her completely, it would only make her colder.

The color started to flood back into Eleven's hands, not looking so... numb anymore. She massaged them together, holding them out to the fire.

"Why are you out here?" Eleven asked.

"I could ask you same thing." Naomi challenged, biting her lip.

"I'm running." She disclosed to Naomi. "From the bad men."

"The bad men, huh?" She kicked the snow with the tip of her boot. "Me too," she responded, thinking about the brothers that had a vendetta for her death.

She thought back to the first time she had met the two brothers. She was with her brother, who she was inseparable with after her transition. She was a year in, and she remembered seeing the green eyed beauty peering at her between the empty bookshelves of the library. He was a short man, but well built. His hair was neatly trimmed and he was clad in a leather jacket, something she often fashioned. He had a strong jaw line and a smile to kill, and unfortunately that was what sucked her in. His brother, James, on the other hand, was much taller, despite being the younger of the two. His hair was longer, shoulder length almost. He liked to wear suits whenever he had the chance. His smile was more gentle, closed lipped.

Hell, if she was human, she would've fallen for the both of them in heartbeat.

She shook herself from her stupor, and faced back to the weak girl beside her.

She didn't quite understand the complex girl she found herself snuggling with in the middle of the forest, but she didn't mind. Tomorrow she would look for her parents, or the cops, or whoever could help her. Even if that meant being seen by her 'bad men'.

She wanted to help the girl, she did, but she also couldn't wait to get her out of her hair. She would only weigh her down when it came to hiding from the hunter's.

Her only assumption was that the girl had some form of amnesia... but then again, this wasn't like most cases. It's almost like she knew, but couldn't form the right words to tell Naomi.

She decided to leave it alone for the night, and glanced back at the girl.

She was fast asleep, now; an exhausted snore escaping her lips.

She peeled herself away from the girl, as carefully as she could without disturbing her, and laid her vertical on the log.

Naomi took a spot on the floor, using her backpack to cushion herself between the wet snow. She leaned back against the log and glanced back at the fire, waiting for the effects of exhausting to sweep her in too.

Naomi groaned, her eyes squinting at the growing sunlight that dripped between the small slits in her eyes. She shielded it with her right hand, sitting up from the grimy floor. The smoke of the fire was still dissipating, but the satisfying smell of burnt wood was still there, reminding her of her camp days back in high school.

She heard someone shuffle beside her, and she glanced at Eleven on the log. She had almost forgotten about the lost girl.

Her head was starting to slump off the mossy log, and Naomi re-positioned her head to place it more on top, but hissed when her hands had touched the girl's warm cheeks.

She immediately retracted after the skin-on-skin contact, black veins snaking up Naomi's arms. It was maybe the only good ability that Naomi considered to be helpful, to be able to take away pain. She remembered using it on the drunk teenagers of high school parties before she fed on them... but now, she used it for good. Or tried to, at least.

Naomi could feel the girl's heart ache. She could feel the cold, the tenderness. It was almost like a disturbing static in the background... It sent shivers up her spine. Most of all, though, she could sense how alone Eleven felt, and how much that was hurting her.

Eleven was in pain. Not physical though, no. Emotional.

She frowned, standing up from the fire pit. She tried not to divulge too much into it... besides. She had just met the kid. She would drop her off to her mommy and daddy by tonight and she would be babysitter-free soon, back on the run from the Winchesters.

She grabbed one of the two remaining blood bags left and took a small stroll away from Eleven. Not too far, enough to keep an eye on her—to hear if she had awoken.

She punctured the blood bag with her teeth, feeling the sting of her exposed fangs as they pushed their way through her gums. It took her merely seconds to guzzle down the bag of blood. She squeezed as much out of it as she could, like an empty caprisun pouch, then tossed it aside, kicking it with the tip of her boot. She wiped the stray trickles of blood from her mouth with her thumb, focusing mostly on the corners of her plump lips; then spun around

"Jesus!" She hissed in a breath. She had sworn she almost thought she felt her heart restart when she saw the five foot girl in front of her, a crooked smile plastered to her lips. "God, you scared me."

"Sorry." Eleven apologized. She didn't look frightened; she must not have seen her down a whole liter of blood then, right?

"It's... It's fine, kid. Bout' time you woke up anyways." She trudged over to the dwindling fire. "You warmer now?" She kicked the melting snow over the last few smoking coals, listening to the

satisfying sizzle it made before turning back to face Eleven.

"Warm." Eleven handed her back the leather Jacket.

Naomi shook her head. "Keep it, supposed to snow later anyways."

Eleven nodded, shrugging her small arms back inside the jacket. She looked funny, standing there in the pink dress, and the plaid shirt as well as the leather jacket that was much too large for her. She was practically swimming in it.

"Besides, you look more bad-ass with that coat on than I do," Naomi shot her a half smile, to which the girl returned.

"Bad-ass." Her brows furrowed together as she tested out the word, but her face softened once she accepted it, giving a small nod.

Naomi chuckled, "Follow me, kid, we'll get back to the tree line before dusk and return you home. You need some food in you." Naomi poked the girl's stomach, to which a growl from her stomach roared back.

This time, Eleven laughed, poking Naomi back.

Naomi bit her lip, trying to hide the smile forming. She was normally more heartless than that. She didn't particularly enjoy the effect this girl had on her, but again, she would be scott-free soon.

Naomi wished the girl was still out cold, so she could use her abilities to speed to town. She didn't want to scare her, though. Something told her this girl was special. Maybe she could keep a secret after all, but she never dared risk it. Not unless she needed to, anyways.

"So tell me more about these bad men," Naomi muttered, starting their trek. She pulled another cigarette, flicking it out of the box and holding it between her lips while she rummaged her backpack for a lighter. "Did they hurt you?"

Eleven trotted beside her, trying to keep up to her quick pace. She nodded.

"Well that's no good..." She murmured incoherently as she held the

cigarette between her lips, lighting it with the same zippo she started the fire with. "Is that why your nose was bleeding?"

She shook her head, wiping her nose like it was still bleeding, and sniffled from the cold. "No. I did that."

"Hmm. You don't disclose a lot of information, do you?"

"Disc—" she started in a questioning tone.

"Never mind," Naomi shrugged off, blowing a puff of smoke away from the girl. She didn't want to have to explain another word to her. "What did these bad men do to you, Eleven?"

Eleven looked down as she walked, taking large steps over rocks or leaping over logs. "They hurt me. They took me away from Mike."

"Mike?" She perked up at the name. She was getting somewhere with the girl. That was a name, at least. "Is Mike your father? Brother?"

Eleven shook her head. "Mike is my friend."

"Good. That's good. Do you know where Mike lives?"

She nodded again, "But I can't go there."

"Why can't you go there, Eleven?"

Eleven liked being called Eleven. She liked being called El, too, but hearing her whole name spill from this girl's round lips was a nice thing to heed. It felt comforting. It made her feel warm and fuzzy inside... like she had another friend. "I can't put Mike in danger anymore. I don't want the bad men to find him, too."

Naomi sighed, wrapping an arm around Eleven. Unveiling information was clearly not her strong point... but by the way she was talking, it seemed like she wasn't suffering from memory loss.

"Where'd you get those clothes?" Naomi asked, swinging around a tree. She took another puff of her cigarette.

"Nancy. Mike's sister."

"Let me guess," Naomi started, "Can't put her in danger either?"

She nodded confidently, but didn't smile.

"Is there anyone else you know?"

She nodded again. "I know Joyce. I know Dustin, and Lucas. I know the police man."

"Hey!" She shrieked, startling Eleven. "That's good, a police officer. He trains to put himself in danger.... He can put up with danger. Can we find him?"

Eleven shrugged, "Not this kind of danger, though."

Naomi groaned, holding the lit cigarette between two fingers, as the other hand swiped down her face. She nudged Eleven down a make-shift path, heading right. "This way."

Eleven took the lead now, since the foliage was too thick, and path too small for them to be side by side.

"Who are your bad men?" She questioned. She was a cheeky bugger, not unveiling any information but asking her the questions.

She took another hit, and then dropped the cigarette into the glistening snow. "They don't like me very much. They don't really want me... alive."

"hmm." It didn't seem to phase Eleven, the mention of death. In some ways, this girl seemed more mature than her age. Others, she seemed like she was lacking. "I want you alive. I trust you."

"You shouldn't trust so easily, kid." She kicked a few branches with her feet away, replacing Eleven in the lead.

"Why not?"

"Not everyone is as nice as they seem." She answered.

"You seem nice." Eleven retorted.

She took a quick look back at her, rolling her eyes. "You've only known me for like, 10 hours."

Eleven shrugged, the left sleeve of the leather jacket and the plaid long sleeve falling down. She used her right arm to pull them back up.

"We'll find someone, don't worry. Then we'll get you all sorted out. You need food, water. You need warmth. Shouldn't be staying out here by yourself at night Eleven."

"Why no—"

"I swear to God if you ask another question..."

"Sorry." Eleven shrugged again.

Naomi shook her head, pushing through the last little bit of bushes before moving to a wider opening.

A few hours had passed, and Naomi could tell the girl was getting tired. They walked in silence, for the most part. It wasn't uncomfortable, though. Occasionally Naomi got a few more pieces of information out of her. From what she could tell, this girl really wasn't looking to get rescued.

She looked exhausted. She needed a nice warm bed to nap in and a good meal. A bath wouldn't hurt, either.

"How about we take a break, yeah?"

Eleven nodded, her eyes fluttering. "I'd like that..." She panted, falling to floor with a small thud. She murmured something incoherently before laying back against a tree trunk, her eyes drifting close.

Naomi tossed her small pack towards El, pivoting before running away from Eleven. She needed to find this girl some food.

She tried to smell something... anything. She could smell something sweet, like berries, and it was nearby according to it's scent.

She took a sharp left, following the scent for a few meters before finding it's source.

An invasive bush of thorns made it's way through the cue of trees, half frozen berries barely surviving in this winter weather. She curled her shirt up, exposing her stomach, before cupping the bottom of her tank into a make-shift bowl. She grabbed a few... not as many as she had expected to get. Only ten, and half of them looked like a mushy frozen mess, but it would keep her going until nightfall.

She trotted back to the girl, handing her her findings.

She nodded politely, her deep set eyebrows still hanging low. "Thank you,"

Despite her limited vocabulary, her words were very stern... very clearly spoken, but quiet. She used single words, a lot. At first it seemed like she was demanding, but then, Naomi realized, it was just the way Eleven processed things.

She sat down beside the girl, crossing her legs. She closed her eyes, listening for noises in case of any nearby intruders... or saviors.

She heard the hushed chomp of the blackberries between's Eleven's teeth, and ignored it. She listened farther into the forest, picking up expected noises like chirping insects, birds tweeting, deer's in a gait. Thankfully, she couldn't hear the noises of any 'bad men'.

She felt cold fingerprints flip her right wrist over, and Naomi's eye's snapped open, frowning at the girl. Did she have no recollection of personal barriers?

Once Naomi's wrist was facing up, Eleven's thumb ran over it loosely. She frowned, her eyes flashing from Naomi's wrist, to her eyes, and back to her wrist before letting go.

"Looking for something?" Naomi rubbed her wrist, like she had just been scolded by a hot kettle.

Eleven shook her head, dropping the remainder of the berries on the floor. "Go." She said, using her single words again instead of saying something like 'let's go'

They had been walking for the whole day. She was slowed down from Eleven's pace at times, and she tried not to mind but she was getting impatient. What if she was found? Especially this close to the road. She could hear the cars, now.

A luminous grayness hung over them as sunlight started to drip below the horizon. They were a little behind schedule, but that was okay. Naomi heard people in the distance, but she ignored it. Most likely hikers, or dog-walkers. She tried not to think too much about it, considering they were so close to the outskirts of town now.

"Do you listen better, with your eyes closed?"

The soft voice beside her shook her from her daze. "What?"

"Your eyes," Eleven muttered, looking up at her with an unreadable face. "You close them when you hear."

Naomi bit her lip, cocking a brow. The girl was very observant. She was highly intelligent for someone so young—she could tell that from the few hours she spent with her. She didn't know how to respond, so she just shrugged.

Eleven nodded, like that was some sort of answer for her.

"We're almost there," Naomi told the girl, "Wanna stop for one more break?" She would have to pick the girl up and carry her if they took another step.

Eleven tucked her chin in, nodding.

They made their way a few more steps to clearing just off the path, and took a rest on the floor, that had started to dampen again due to the depleting degrees. Eleven had pulled off the leather jacket Naomi had borrowed to her and set it aside on the ground. She plucked at the patches of grass underneath her with her blunt, dirt-caked fingernails, and breathed a long sigh through her nostrils.

Naomi took a long look at the weak girl, crisscrossed beside her.

The ice crystals from last night had melted off, and the tips of her hair started to curl miscellaneously in short waves.

Her long eyelashes fluttered as her eyes darted around, from her shoes, to the patch of grass she was fiddling with, to the path ahead. Her jaw clenched and unclenched, and Naomi's eyes drifted to her collarbone.

She watched as the regular thump of her heartbeat pumped through her veins by her neck. Naomi had to turn herself away from the girl. She wasn't hungry... she had just fed this morning. She had to space out her feedings so they were more on a schedule from now on.

A chittering squirrel darted past the both of them, shaking them both from their trance.

"I-I'm gonna go check what's over the hill." Naomi licked her lips, pointing to the small mount to the left of them. "See if I can see the clearing."

Eleven nodded, her jaw clenching again.

Naomi took a fresh breath of air, ridding the previous thought's of hunger that had taken over, and gaited away from Eleven.

She slipped a few times in the snow—which wasn't very graceful for a vampire—and had to climb on her hands and feet in order to make it over the rise. She kicked the wet leaves away as she fast-walked down the opposite side of the hill, and slowed to a stop on the other side. She placed her hands loosely in the pockets of her blacked jeans, and let her eyes drift over the prospect. She could faintly see the lights of a single car on the road a while away. It looked to be about another half hour at their current pace. She just hoped Eleven could make it that far without food and water.

On the bright side, she would probably only have to deal with this girl for another hour, maybe. She would find someone as soon as she got there, then dump the problem on them. Again, it wasn't that she didn't like the girl... She was entertaining, not annoying like most kids—but she didn't have time to be babysitting a twelve year old

"Well well well." She heard the click of a gun behind her, and then felt cold metal press between her shoulder blades. "Did you not listen for us or something, Ms. Cross? Gotta get that vamp healing checked.

Do they have a special doc for that?"

Naomi held her breath, doing her best to not move a muscle.

While the one brother pressed a gun to her back, James circled in front of her, another gun glued to his hands.

"Didn't take you as the 'forest runaway' type of prey. I took you as more as the one who would surround yourself by humans, try to camouflage yourself into normality." Sebastian hissed into her ear. She could feel his hot breath on the back of her neck, and she shivered.

Sebastian pressed the head of the gun harder into her back, making her squeal.

James snorted in front of her, his lips quirking up into a faux-smile. He clicked the safety off of his pistol, and pointed it at her forehead. He was much more distanced than Seb, but still didn't give her enough room to escape. She could, but she'd need a distraction.

"Hey!" Sebastian shot a bullet into the air, removing it from her back for a moment before placing it back on again. "I'm talking to you, leech."

Naomi covered her ears from the ringing she heard after the gun had gone off. Super hearing did have its downsides...

Momentarily, she had forgotten about Eleven. She prayed that the girl had ran from the noise of the bullet, instead of letting curiosity get the best of her.

She wasn't surprised that moments later, she felt a bullet enter her shoulder. She also wasn't surprised by the fact that, after Sebastian had shot her, James did too. Luckily, his aim wasn't as good... He managed to only clip the side of her face, causing blood to pour from her eyebrow. It stung, but it was bearable. It did flood her vision in the right eye though.

Naomi spun around swiftly, in an inhuman motion, and pushed the man away from her with the palms of her hands as much supernatural force as she could, and catapulted him to the nearest tree. She heard

the crack in the bark, and she smiled at the distressed noise the hunter let out.

"You're lucky those were regular bullets, Naomi." She tried not to move her body—instead, she only rotated her head towards the other hunter. "We have been fair to you, Naomi. We made a mistake by letting you and the leader escape. A meer... slip up." She watched as the hunter brushed his long hair over his shoulder, moving his hand towards his jacket pocket and pulling out a small crossbow.

Naomi gulped.

Now, she was in shit.

Not because she had the head of a weapon pressed between her eyes yet again. No, that wasn't it. The reason it shook her to her core, made her feel fear, real fear, was because it was loaded with one of the only things that could kill her in this world.

A wooden stake.

She exhaled, scanning her surroundings. The world seemed to slow for a moment, and she closed her eyes.

This was it.

She was dead.

She hadn't really expected to live a long life on the run, anyways, but she wanted to live longer than this. She wanted to avenge her brother. She wanted to watch the life drain in her creator's eyes. She wanted to Jasper to suffer...

But no.

She shut her eyes tightly, sucking in a breath, and listened to her surroundings. It was satisfyingly peaceful this time at night, especially with the light snow fall starting again. It was like you could almost hear the flakes hitting the ground.

She waited for death to come...

But it never came

"What the..." James hushed. The cross brow was removed from her forehead, and her eyes flashed open. Everything happened so quickly after that. Her breathing hitched in her chest, and she watched with wide eyes as the man in front of her started floating in mid air. It only lasted for a mere millisecond, before the gun in his hand was snatched away and thrown across the forest floor... like a ghost had whacked it away. Without delay, James went flying in the opposite direction.... Like the ghost had hit him too.

She didn't know what to say... or what to do.

Once second, she was facing death. The next second... her killer was flung across the forest by some unknown force.

She heard the fresh snow crunch behind her, and for the second time that night, she held her breath. She took her time spinning a full 180. Her mouth hung agape, and her now-red eyes fell wide.

When her wet boots had finally spun the whole way around in the snow, she stopped. She was dumbfounded... she had no words.

With furrowed brow, and gritted teeth; Eleven held her hands up to the other hunter, and with some sort of eerie force, she lifted a recovering Sebastian, and propelled him away at an uncanny speed.

"What the... Hell." Naomi watched as a cherry liquid started to leak out of Eleven's left nostril, like a faulty faucet. She was unquestionably, undeniably, one-hundred percent not hungry anymore.

She was just... in disbelief.

What was this girl?

Some sort of witch?

No. She was too young. Much too young... and she would have sensed her aura.

Eleven relaxed, and she could see the exhaustion hit her like train.

She took a few faulty step backwards, and Naomi used her quick reflexes to catch her before she fell.

James started to recover again, picking himself up from the floor.

He reached for the crossbow again, and this time, Naomi didn't have Eleven to save her ass. She didn't care anymore. She had seen something so mind-bogglingly implausible that she couldn't even function. Who cared at this point if the girl found out that she had abilities too?

She hoisted Eleven on to her back, placing both arms around her neck, and ran.

Again, it wasn't like any normal running. Naomi ran as fast as she could. Her feet tiptoed across the snowy ground, moving more hastily then she ever had before. The half an hour estimate she gave herself to make it to the tree line was reduced to 1 minute, with still a few feet of safety before completely divulging themselves into the park reserve.

She carefully dropped Eleven to the ground, and knelt in front of her.

Eleven let out an exhausted pant, and used the sleeve of Naomi's jacket to wipe the blood on her nose.

"You... You're like me." Eleven spoke quietly.

Naomi shook her head. "Not like you. Not like you, Eleven." She was misunderstood. She was bad, where as Eleven was good. Eleven had just saved her ass. She owed this pre-teen her freaking life! She then realized why the girl had played with her wrist, earlier. She was looking for a number, a tattooed number like hers."Eleven..." She shook the girls shoulder, "You just saved my life." Tears started to brim her bottom lids, and she let out an exasperated grin. "You saved my life," She repeated, pulling the girl into a tight hug.

They shared an embrace for what seemed like an eternity.

The girl's scent was more detailed now. Over the layers of mud and dirt, she smelt so clean. She smelt pure... if that made sense. She smelt like flowers, but fruits at the same time. Her heart beat steadily

in her chest, and Naomi brought her closer.

She had no guess as to what this girl was... but she didn't care. All she could do was hold her. She didn't know how to repay her, so this was all she could offer. Luckily, Eleven held her closely back. She tugged on Naomi's hair, scrunching and unscrunching it in her fingers. Eleven breathed in Naomi's scent, and then softened into hug.

"Thank you." Naomi expressed again.

It wasn't either of them that had broken the hug, it was the sound of a heavy steel toed boot stepping on a branch a few feet away from them.

Using her abilities again, Naomi hastily stood in front of a weak Eleven, shielding it from the intruders. There was no way the hunters could have caught up that quickly, especially after the number Eleven did on them. If it wasn't them..... then who was it?

A bright beam pore into Naomi's eyes, and in response, she shielded it with her hands. It took a few seconds to adjust to the vivid light, and the first thing she noticed as her eyes started to go back to normal was a tall shadow. They were brawn, husky-looking. They stood confidently.

She watched as the shadow, clearly a male, moved their free hand to their head. She tensed up for a moment, wondering if it was another gun being pulled out. They had been shot at enough today... Thankfully, she watched as the man dropped his beam of light to the floor and removed his hat.

"*Eleven...*" His words were barely a whisper, but she had managed to pick them up.

Naomi's head spun around to watch as a frightened Eleven use her as a human shield. Once she caught side of the new face-clearly memorable to Eleven, she removed herself from behind Naomi and took a step forward.

Eleven recognized this man. Was this the cop she was speaking about before? That would explain the attire he was clad in. His expression

matched the same one Naomi had only moments ago.

Eleven brought Naomi's jacket up on her shoulders again, then took a step towards the officer. Before she had even made the second step, she collapsed. Her knees gave way, and she starting to fall to the floor.

The officer managed to catch her head before it hit the ground, and Naomi moved around him to help anchor her shoulders up.

Her eyes were shut, clearly fading into unconsciousness, and her mouth parted ever so slightly to take in small, even breaths. The vampire listened for a heartbeat and was relieved to find that it was steady, and healthy. She was still dangerously cold, though, and deprived of food and water.

She let the officer pick her up completely, holding her wedding style in her arms.

"I found her in the woods last night," She told him before he had the chance to even ask her how she had found her... "She hasn't eaten or drunken really... I tried to get her back into town as quickly as I could," That wasn't completely a lie... but she could feel the guilt swelling in her conscience.

The officer started to walk away, but he kept his head turned ever so slightly towards Naomi, to tell her to continue, and to follow her.

"She uh... She saved my life, officer."

He let out a light chuckle. "Tell me about it." The sarcasm in his voice was tangible. She was surprised to hear that remark. As if he wasn't surprised by this information. Naomi frowned. "That would explain the bullet in your back then, eh?"

She had almost forgotten about that, but the mention of it again caused a twinge of pain, making her wince. She didn't know what to say... why wasn't he freaking out? Did he know about the supernatural? She listened for his heart, to see if there was any hint of stuttering – some sort of giveaway; but there wasn't.

They walked down a small hill, trotting towards a police truck that

was presumably his. "Get in," he ordered.

Naomi didn't question it.

She waited and abetted as he loaded the beat girl into the backseat, and watched as he moved to the driver's side and started the truck. It roared to life with a worrying sputter. She didn't say anything as the truck made its way down the winding road. She only listened to the background noise of the police radio and the obnoxious chomp of the officer's gum chewing.

He looked to be in his 40's. Tall man. Bearded by a few inches, and had a mustache. He touched it with his right hand, massaging it, while his left hand made a right turn onto a dirt road heading back into the reserve.

"Hey! Woah. Woah..." She placed a cold hand on his warm, clothed, bicep. "Do you not see these bullets in my back?" She winced again, "We are not going back in there."

The officer shook his head, "Well I'm not taking her back into town. The doctors will find her... Too high profile for her. She needs to be some where safe. Some where hidden."

Naomi didn't know the man driving well enough to question the statement, but it was clearly in correlation to the girl's unnatural abilities.

They drove in silence for a few minutes... not knowing what to say. "Where are you taking her?" She broke.

"I've got a cabin in my name not too far off the gravel road. I'll have to walk a bit... but it's a good place to hide her until things die down." Again, she didn't question his open-ended statement. The officer glanced at her, for the first time that night. His eyes were filled with purpose, determination. "The name's Hopper, by the way. Chief Jim Hopper."

Naomi nodded politely, glancing out the window to watch the snowfall pick up. "Naomi Cross."

"New in town?" He raised a brow. "Or did you escape from that

psychotic lab in the middle of town as well?" He paused, before speaking again, "Got super-healing or somethin'?"

"What? No." Naomi shut down. "No..."

"So?" He questioned, tapping the steering wheel with his thumb, "What is it then?"

"*Or somethin'*" She repeated his words in his voice, her eyes drifting ahead.

Hopper didn't push it, and for that she respected.

"Why're you giving me a ride?" She asked after another few minutes of quiet.

"We're almost there," he announced before sighing. "I don't know, you saved the kid. Thought I'd help you out by at least taking the chunk metal out of your back."

Naomi sighed, not knowing how to respond. She watched for next minute or so, as Jim Hopper's eyes darted from the road, to outside his window, to his rear view mirror, and all repeating in a cycle again. He massaged his face with his free hand again, and spoke quietly—so quietly she almost didn't catch it. "Don't worry, kid. Those doctors won't find you again."

The car pulled into a small dirt lot, only big enough for one or two more vehicles. It clearly wasn't used often, as the foliage had overgrown evasively.

The chief hopped out of the truck, hastily moving to the back of the truck. Naomi watched from inside as the officer opened the trunk, rummaging through various pieces of metal, and pulling out a small pair of rusty pliers.

"Come on kid, get out."

She didn't know how to respond to that. Her eyes widened at the remark.

"Hey, are you in there?" he hissed, tapping his own forehead, "Want

the bullet out or not?"

"Oh... Yeah." She opened the creaky door, jumping out of the lifted vehicle. She felt bad for leaving Eleven in there... like someone was going to steal her. Her thoughts were justified, especially after what Hopper had just disclosed.

"Turn around," The officer spun the 24 year old around, forcing her to face the inky blackness of the night.

Hopper didn't hold back one bit as he dug the pliers into her skin.

"Ow!" She grimaced, "Jesus, be careful. The skin has probably already started to heal over."

Hopper said nothing, and made no effort to be gentler.

She sucked in a breath when he had finally got a grip on the bullet, the one on her shoulder. She clenched her fists as he removed it, and let out a small whimper as she felt the healing skin rip away from the bullet.

"Shit," She cursed.

"There you go," He removed the pliers from her back, and handed her the bloody bullet that he had unsanitarily removed.

"Thanks..." She muttered.

Hopper didn't reply. Instead, he raced over to the driver's side, removing the keys from the ignition, and grabbed Eleven from the back seat. He carried her the same way he did before, and shut the driver-side door with the boot of foot.

Hopper started off on his bush-whacking, using his feet to kick away loose vines, broken branches. "You coming?" Hopper asked, after realizing Naomi hadn't followed him.

She remained in the small lot, her arms uncomfortably at her side. She looked rough, after the past two nights she had been through. Her brown eyes faded to a dull grey, her bouncy hair had no life. Her lips, chapped, and for some reasons he felt colder than normal. "I... I

can't." Truth be told, she wanted to. She was curious... but she didn't want to put the girl in anymore danger.

"What-" Hopper looked back at her, both eyebrows raised high on his forehead. "Girl saves your ass, and you don't even wait for her to wake up to thank her?"

"I can't..." Was all she said, again. She bit at the dead skin at her bottom lip; eagerly waiting a reply from the Chief.

"Suit yourself." And with that, she was left alone.

She watched as Chief Hopper carried an unconscious Eleven towards whatever bungalow he kept in the forest. They were visible for the first sixty seconds, but the few seconds after that, she watched as the inky blackness of the night sky ate them up, leaving her alone; once again.

There she was... back to square one.

Alone.

A week had passed... and for some reason—she didn't leave the town of Hawkins, Indiana. No, instead, she found herself in a 24-hour diner in the middle of town, sipping a stale cup of coffee in one of the back red booths at 1:00 in the morning. The faux leather of the seats were cracked underneath, and she could feel it through her fishnets. It stuck to the backs of her thighs as she tried to remove herself from the booth.

She squirmed in the seat, taking the last sip of her cold coffee before removing herself from the chair. She placed the stained mug on the table, leaving a dollar for the waitress, and pivoted.

She was met with a hard chest. She crashed into it, her torso pressing into theirs, and she froze. Not again. It had only been a week.... She had been so stupid to stay in Hawkins. They were the number one hunter's in the entire world for all she knew! Why had she let some stupid kid and her police man keep her in the same town? She had been so naïve. So dense. She'd be gone by now, normally. Three

town's over...

These men were good hunters, and the only advantage she had over them was her speed; and she wasn't even using that now. All because of the psychic girl.

Sebastian pressed his chest harder against her's, pushing her down a quiet hall leading towards the bathroom stalls and the back exit towards the alley. "Keep moving..." He muttered with a fake smile on his, fooling the other customer's around him. "Turn around, and move." He shoved something cold, and steel into her torso.

Immediately, she had regretted wearing the black jacket that would conceal her wound in front of an audience. He pushed the knife further into her, causing her to gasp in pain, and then removed it, but not before placing it back in her again—this time twisting it. The sickening squelch of the blood made her want to gag, but the overwhelming feeling of a knife inside her freakin' body overpowered that.

She let out a small cry, and Seb turned it the other way. Tears welled in her eyes from the pain, but she knew she couldn't speak or he would just hurt her more. "Do as I say," he whispered in her ear. "Or a stake will be the next thing I stab you with." The stinging pain made her bite her tongue, drawing blood.

She nodded, hated being told what to do.

The hunter removed the knife, placing it in his boot pocket, and spun the girl around.

They walked slowly, without purpose. He placed his hands on her shoulders, making it look like they were old friends... or father and daughter. Little did anyone else know, he held her in a vice tight grip, digging his thumbs into her shoulder blades to keep her paralyzed as he forced her through the back exit.

The second she made it through the door frame, she tried to make a run for it.

She ran towards the street, but before she could dart around the

corner, James walked around, rifle in hand. His eyebrows furrowed as he focused, cocking the gun to line up his shot.

She used her speed to pivot, and whiz down the other side of the alley, towards the steel fence; but Sebastian blocked her, a wooden stake carved to a point in each hand.

These Winchester were so damn impatient... She twitched as she felt shards of wood splinter inside of her, the noise of the rifle still echoing in her ears.

As if she wasn't in enough pain already...

She wanted to collapse right then and there, but no. She couldn't give up.

She had to put up some kind of fight.

She lunged forward, flashing her eyes a bright red. To her happiness, she had sparked some fear in Sebastian, causing him to flinch. That second of fear allowed her to dive forward for her attack. She hissed at the hunter, and sank her teeth into the right side of his neck. She made no attempt to be clean; instead, she took a few gulps of the crimson liquid, then thrashed her teeth around, ripping as much skin as feasible.

She heard him roar in anger, and in response, he took his free hand and stabbed her left arm with one of the stakes.

She screamed, immediately releasing Sebastian. She stumbled back a few steps, wiggling the wooden stake out of her. She tossed it to the ground, getting ready to lunge again, when she felt the second shot of the gun enter her backside.

"Oh God," She murmured, never really feeling true pain until then.

She mustered up the last amount of strength she had, and used her abilities to whiz away as fast as she could.

When she was far enough away, a few blocks down from where she was previously, she collapsed. Her head hit the green dumpster in an alley way, and she toppled over.

She moaned, her eyes rolling back into her head.

The acute twinge was so agonizing that she had blacked out for a moment. She felt the shards of the wooden bullets shift as she moved, attempting to roll herself over. She felt them dig into her scapula, her hips... her spine. Most importantly, though, she felt one single shaving press dangerously close to her heart. One bad move, and she was dead.

She slammed her head against the dumpster, leaving a dent.

With her teeth gritted, she tried to crawl. To make some movement... any. If she stayed in one place too long they'd find her, and that would be the end.

The pain was somehow cold... but hot at the same time. There were so many pieces everywhere that she just felt it... everywhere. Her body burned, seared. The pain consumed her, drowning her in pure agony...

How was she to get out of this alive?

Who was she to go to for help?

There were only two people she knew in this town, after all.

The last few yards she was barely even conscious. She stumbled through the woodland, tripping over tree roots and staggering to the floor. Her hair got caught in branches on the tumble down, and she sputtered up more blood.

She let out a very wet cough, red liquid projectiled towards the leafy earth.

Every time she made the notion of coughing. She could feel the shards of the wooden stake scrape against her heart, and she let out a loud cry.

Tears welled in her eyes, threatening to pore over. She clawed at the ground, seeing the tarnished cabin in sight now. She was on her hands and knees, her stomach just grazing the floor. She hissed in a breath as she army-crawled the last few feet, and her tears betrayed

her; pouring over the brim of her bottom lids.

She thought she might pass out from the extent of pain she was in.

She tried to reach back with her good arm, attempted to pick the pieces of wood from the shot gun wound, but it was no use. Her skin had started to heal over. The wood fused to epidermis, and the only way to get them out was to cut them, and she couldn't see.

She heard two heartbeats as she neared the cabin, both calm and steady.

'Not for long,' she thought.

Her right elbow slammed against the first step, and she used as much strength as she had to hoist herself up to the second step.

She groaned as she felt the splinters from the rotten wood of the steps scrape her stomach. Several noises of discomfort escaped her lips, and she spat out another mouthful of blood as she hoisted herself up the second step.

She had to take a breather before conquering the last step, as her vision started to blur and her world gyrated.

With the last bit of potency she had, she heaved herself up the final step. They were still sound asleep, and she didn't need supernatural hearing to hear the police officer's strident snore inside the main room.

She couldn't bring herself to move her arms, so instead of knocking, she shut her eyes and slammed the side of her head into the door.

Exhaustion and defeat was so close to its climax, but she couldn't give up yet.

Once, twice, three times.

No one stirred.

She repeated it.

Once, twice, three times.

This time, she heard movement. She could hear the girl she spent more than 24 continuous hours with tiptoe around the aged bungalow.

She also heard a door creak open, and then a sleepy protesting Jim Hopper.

"El, go to sleep. It's nearly 1 o'clock." He muttered, his lips smacking together to get more saliva.

She heard Eleven shake the officer and the blankets around him again, to which he moaned in disapproval.

Naomi let out a aggravated whimper. She couldn't waste anymore time waiting for the two to answer the door.

She knocked her head once against the door. She tried for a second time, but felt much too exhausted to make the movement, and her head collapsed to the floor.

She let out another wet cough. Luckily, the two noises were enough to disturb the attention of the two beating hearts on the other side of the door. The cabin went silent. Two heartbeats stammered away like runaway trains and she could hear the loud thumping in her ears, making her mouth salivate.

"*Shh...*" She heard the officer whisper to Eleven.

Eleven made a frightening murmur, but remained quiet after.

Again, she had no time to wait.

"Let me in!" She wailed, her eyes drifting into the back of her head as she re-positioned her bloody body on the porch.

There was quiet shuffling, and then Hopper spoke. "Hey, kid! No!" he hissed.

"It's her," She whispered back.

Again, she was met with only silence. Another few seconds passed before she heard anything. For a moment, she wondered if her hearing had faded to that of a human's.

Then, she heard the creaks.

The matured cottage made itself noticed as the officer stepped on the old floorboards. She listened for the rise in his heartbeat every time the wood squeaked.

"It—"

"Shh!" Jim Hopper snapped back, shutting the young girl up.

That was it. She was tired of waiting. "I can hear you!" She yelled towards the door, placing her lips near where the door met the frame. "I can hear you coming closer to the door, Hopper. I heard your snoring.. I can hear the ticking clock in Eleven's room, I can hear every noise your feet make as you take a step closer to me, and I can hear your heartbeats." She coughed again, not even phased by the amount of blood she sputtered to her lips this time.

"Let. Me. In." She demanded.

All at once, every single lock on the door opened (and there were at least six). Impossible for someone with only two hands. She thought back to the night Eleven had saved her from her 'bad men'. Her abilities were no doubt involved in Jim's angry muttering towards the pre-teen.

"*What* are you doing," He emphasized, clearly speaking to Eleven; his head regarding to the left.

"She needs help," She answered, as if it was the simplest thing ever.

The chief groaned loudly, ignoring the door that opened in front of him without his consent. "What did I say about our rules?" he spoke to an out of site Eleven.

"Not stupid."

He sighed, before settling his eyes down on me. He placed a hand on

his pajama clad hip, the other on the door. When he saw her state, he frowned. "What the hell happened to you?"

She struggled to look up at him, a few painful tears escaping her eyes as she writhed on the porch. She wanted to slap herself. What was she doing? Showing up at someone's cabin that she had only met once... Someone who was a police officer, for that matter. She had done perfectly fine trusting no one for the past two years... so why now, did she put her trust in the policeman and the pre-teen with psionic powers that she had only met once prior?

"I didn't know where else to go..."

Please reivew and let me know your thoughts! Constructive criticism welcome but please don't come here to bash about how someone had to add the wolrd of supernatural into another awesome tv show.

2. Chapter 2: Blood, Sweat, and Tears

Here's the second chapter! I know it's a lot shorter, I'll try to make the next one longer. I'd love to hear your thoughts on what you would wanna see, as El and Naomi will hang looooots.

She woke to an unfamiliar room. The scent was unfamiliar, the scene was unfamiliar, and she was surprised to hear two hearts beating in her ears. Her eyelids struggled to lift, as if there were heavy weights pulling them down, and her nose scrunched up at the burning smell of antibacterial cleaner.

"Awake." She heard a female voice ring in here ears, pronouncing the 'k' very prominently.

She pinched the bridge of her nose, groaning—as if that would release some of the pressure in her head.

She heard two heavy feet shuffle closer to her.

"Thought you were dead when you passed out on my porch," her eyes struggled to focus on the brawn blur in front of her. She fisted her eyes with her right hand. "Until the kid told me she saw you drinking a bag of blood the day you found her."

She sighed, once more, then ran a hand down her face.

It was the Chief.

Beside her, beside the bed she lay in, she saw Eleven. She was dressed in new clothes since she saw her last time, but they were still just as dirty. She had darkened blood on her jeans. Her oversized sweater was also stained with crimson, from her hands to her elbows.

They both looked rough. Their gory appearance matched hers, though.

That's when she remembered.

"El!" Hopper yelled, carrying Naomi's body to the small single bed in the

center of the room, once previously his "Grab me the first aid kit, above the oven." He tried to shake the girl awake as he lay her on the dirty sheets. For a moment, her eyes fluttered open before rolling back into her head and spitting a fountain of black.

"Jesus..." He hissed.

He glanced back at Eleven, who has used her powers to retrieve the first aid kit, and gifted it to Hopper. She looked frightened, and he didn't want to frighten the girl, but he needed her help.

Hopper placed a bloody hand over Naomi's body, flipping her on her side, and kept his palm placed firmly to the largest shard of the bullet in her back. The blood oozed from it, a black liquid seeping with it.

"What's wrong with her?" Eleven asked.

"She's been shot." Hopper explained, trying to shut the girl up as he attempted to save the mysterious woman's life. He knew what Eleven meant, though. She had been shot before and barely batted an eye. Now, a black fountain of tar spat from her mouth onto the bed Hopper was previously asleep on. She looked young, very young. Early 20's maybe. Too young to be shot. There was obviously something disarray about this girl, though. She had survived a gun shot before, and by the state of her body now, it was clear that the previous wound had healed completely, not a scar in site.

He remembered pulling the bullet with the pair of distressed pliers, and feeling like her skin was trying to hang on to it, little hands trying to grab the bullet back

"The bullet..." She grunted out, spitting onto the wooden floor. "It's wood. It's wooden.... It's scraping my heart! I can feel it," She gurgled out. Her consciousness faded out once again. "I can feel it...."

Hopper groaned. "Just hold on, stay awake." He ordered the girl, shaking her once again. With one hand covering her bloody wound, his other sifted through the much too tiny first aid kit. He grabbed a hemostat, thankful he even had one in his underfilled kit, and started to pick out the visible pieces of wood.

"Gah! Shit," She cursed when the first shard nearest to her head was pulled out.

Eleven came trotting over to Hopper with a plastic bowl holding it out for him. Hopper unclicked the hemostat, placing the bloody sliver in the bowl.

He nodded at Eleven, thanking her, then turned back to help the girl.

He frowned, confusion spreading across his face as he watched the skin sew together in front of his eyes. This time, though, a pink scar faintly tainted her pale skin.

He shook his head. There was no time to awe in fathom of her super-abilities, he already had one female in the house who's powers he didn't completely understand.

He picked at another piece, still surfaced in her skin. His game plan was to pick out the exterior ones first, only lightly embedded, then he would go after the one's inside of her. Lastly, the one near her heart. It was a bad plan... but it was a plan. Her body would at least try to heal by the time he went after heart (He hoped).

He pulled on another piece of wood near her left shoulder blade, and tightened his grip to get the piece out. It was stuck pretty well in there.

"El," he grunted, pulling at the hemostat again, "Pass me the scissors." He nodded at the first aid kit spewed over the floor, now.

"Scissors?" She asked, her face plastered with worried confusion.

"The scissors! You know, they're like this," he nodded at the hemostat, "but pointy."

The girl coughed, again, causing his grip to slip.

Eleven rushed over to him, a pair of silver medical scissors in her hand.

He grabbed it from her, using the hemostat to tug on the piece of wood though. He snipped away at her skin, making a bigger hole so the shard could slip out.

It worked for the surfaced ones, but once he made his way deeper into the

skin, it would heal too quickly. By the time he cut one spot, and moved to the next, the previous spot would heal up and he didn't have enough access.

"God dammit!" He groaned, shoving the scissors deeper into her, no remorse for considering her pain anymore.

"What is wrong?" Eleven asked, kneeling beside Hopper.

Hopper twisted the scissors inside of her, cringing at the sickening squelch it made as he dug it deeper. "I can't keep the skin open, it keeps healing over."

There was a few moments of silence, (well not silence considering he just stabbed the instrument in her repeatedly, hoping for something to give way) before Eleven spoke, a look of an epiphany very apparent. "I can." She locked eyes with Hopper, who questioned her with his face. "I can keep it open," She repeated, lifting her hands up to the girl on the bed.

She stood, her palms facing towards Naomi, and focused.

Hopper watched in disbelief as Eleven used her powers to keep the wounds open. He watched the blood drip from her nose, he watched her brow sink deep into her forehead, and her lips tighten. He couldn't believe this was his life, and that he was picking wooden bullets out of a half dead, super healing, super hearing girl, all while a psionic pre-teen used her powers to help.

It worked, though. Eleven managed to keep the skin apart, and he managed to pick the last of the pieces on her back out. He flipped the girl back over, and sat on the bed for the rest of his work. He cut a stripe down the girl's tank-top, exposing her pale body.

He got to work straight away on the bullets that had made it through to the other side of her body, and worked quickly as he could see Eleven was struggling.

When he got what he thought was every piece out, he looked at Eleven.

"Okay, El," He took a deep breath in through his nostrils. "I need you to be careful with this one. Keep it holding for as long as you can, and I'll tell you when I'm out."

Eleven nodded, her brows still furrowed.

Hopper nodded back, moving his hands to his lips in a praying motion. He released a quick exhale, readying himself, before taking a small switchblade he had on him and digging into the left side of her chest. With one hand, he stretched the slippery skin, the other, he worked in stabbing the tip of the blade deeper.

"GAH!" She tried to jolt upright, but Hopper held her down. "IT HURTS IT HURTS IT HURTS!"

He could see the tip of the piece of wood in her slippery, red flesh. "Stop moving!" He tried to use his elbow to hold her down, but it was too hard. He kept slipping from the blood... and she was unnaturally strong.

"STOP STOP STOP IT HURTS!" Her words rang in his ears, but he didn't oblige to them.

"El!" He screamed, "Hold her down!"

In one quick instant, with the shake of El's left hand, the girl grew still. Her hands flew to her side and she lay immobile on the bed. He was carving his way closer to her heart, getting closer to the embedded piece.

Despite her body being motionless, her lips continued to howl words of protest. "I CAN FEEL IT! IT'S SCRAPING MY HEART! IT HURTS SO-OH GOD."

Hopper grumbled, biting his tongue as he ignored the girl. Once he thought he had exposed enough of the woodchip, he dropped the knife on the bed and picked up the hemostat. He pierced into her thin skin again with the blunt end. "El! It's starting to heal!"

He heard Eleven start to let out a low grumble, before it grew and grew and grew—and next thing he knew, Naomi wasn't the only one letting out a bloodcurdling scream.

The skin parted once again, and Hopper made a hasty movement to pick up the piece, making sure it wasn't too fused with her heart, and pulled it out of her body.

"Okay! Okay!" Hopper dropped the hemostat, and the last of the bullet, in

the bowl, and fell back on the floor.

Eleven fell too, and they both just layed on the cold, damp wood, all three of their chests exhaling loudly.

They did it. They had saved the girl.

She glanced at her left arm, seeing it bandaged up neatly, and she pulled the thin sheet on top of her, off—to reveal light pink scars on her torso. There were some scab's, too. Her body ached. The thing about wooden bullets, and stake's in general, was that her skin didn't heal as quicker. The process was much slower.

"I'm no Doc," Hop said, slowing to a stop beside her-or his- bed, and placed his hands on his hips. "But I'm gonna suggest bed rest for a few days. The one in your heart was a nasty bugger to get out... Took a toll on all three of us." Hopper smirked at Eleven, and Eleven's lips quirked up ever so slight as her eyes moved from Hopper to Naomi.

Naomi, still buzzed with bewilderment, moved her good hand to her chest, running her finger's over the terribly taped piece of gauze above her left clothed breast.

"Oh! Yeah," Hopper grabbed her hand, his fingers clasped around her wrist. "I wouldn't touch that if I were you."

Using her strength, Naomi snatched her hand back, cradling it in her chest. "God... my body aches."

Hopper nodding, his bottom lip curling in. "Yeah you slept for like 18 hours, chicka." He glanced at the watch on his left wrist, "It's nearly 10:00pm"

"Bed time." Eleven muttered beside her. She had nearly forgot she was there.

"Yes, kid," he nodded. "Your bedtime. Take a bath and clean up, then time for bed."

Eleven nodded politely, flashing Naomi an almost-smile. Naomi named it an almost-smile because she could barely see her lips curl up. It's like she wanted to smile... but she was nervous. Naomi would

name it Eleven's almost smile, because it was the only label that made sense.

She watched Eleven walk over to the bathroom, adjacent to her beside the kitchen, and shut the door. Eleven didn't close it completely, no. She watched her leave an inch of space between the frame, and she could see Eleven's left eye peak through to see Naomi.

"She always does that," Hopper muttered. "Think she's worried we'll leave her or something. Or that something's going to get her." He cupped a hand around his mouth "Hey remember, not too hot kid! Blue's for cold, Red's for warm."

"Got it," She heard a reply.

Hopper walked over to the dining room (and it wasn't really a dining room considering it was a 5x5 coffee table with two chairs on either side) and grabbed one of the wooden chairs. He paced over to Naomi, placing the chair by the head of her bed. He spun it around, so the back of the chair was facing her, and then climbed over the chair, one leg on each side, and rested his chin on the back of the chair.

"So an explanation would be nice." Hopper muttered, clearing his throat. "I mean, a week ago I see you wandering the woods with two bullet holes in your back—El tells me she watched you drank a bag of blood—"

"She wasn't supposed to see that," Naomi argued, her brows furrowing.

"For God's sake," He ran another hand down his face, "That's what you're worried about?"

She shrugged in the bed, instantly regretting it after she felt the ripple of pain radiate over her trunk. "If I told you, you'd never believe me."

"After these past few months, you'd be surprised." His fingers played with the hair on his face. Not quite just stubble, but not quite yet a beard. The scratchy noise it made caused her to shiver.

That definitely intrigued Naomi, but she felt too beat to do anything.

"So who shot you? Must have had some hell of a vendetta against you. For all I know I just let a murderer in my home."

Naomi twitched. She was a murderer. She had killed before... It took a lot of strength to not kill again when she was in the presence of blood. She remembered the nights she would come home from the bar, a gentleman and a lady on each arm. She remembered going to their living quarters, most of time apartments considering they were eligible bachelors or bachelorettes. She recalled the taste of booze in their blood as she fed on them, they being too wasted to even comprehend what was going.

She remembered feeding and feeding and feeding, until they were left lifeless on the floor. She remembered how euphoric she felt. The feeling of elation was etched into her brain. She should do it again, the next night. Then the next night. And the next night. When suspicion rose, she moved to the next town over.

It was the first day of steeping foot into whatever town was next, that she felt that miniscule amount of guilt.

Beauty of being undead, she could suppress the feeling—because she hated that feeling.

"Hunters."

"Hunter's?" Hopper raised a brow, sitting back in the chair, his arms hanging off of the back of it. "So someone just accidentally shot you while hunting in the middle of the night?"

She shook her head, "No, dipshit. Different types of... erm—hunters."

He cocked his head. "Go on."

She licked her lips, rolling over in the bed to be on her side and to face him. "They don't hunt animals... they hunt the supernatural."

"Stop."

"What?" She made a face of disgust and confusion.

"Just please... stop. I can't take that. After everything I can't take the

fuckin' supernatural."

She rolled her eyes. Did he want to hear what she had to say or not? She was perfectly happy walking away from the cabin and never seeing them ever again. She didn't need their help. Well... maybe until she got back on her feet.

"So what does that make you then? Vampire? Werewolf? Zombie?"

"First one," She retorted.

He shook his head, his tongue pressing into the side of his cheek as he stood. "Nu uh. No. I don't believe you."

Again, she shrugged; her eyes rolling. "Believe what you want, chief. Last cop I trusted ended up dead in a dumpster in the back of an old diner."

"How the hell do you walk in the sun?" He ignored, starting to pace beside the couch in the living area. "I mean, I guess I've never seen you walk in the sun..."

She held up her good arm, her middle finger sporting a large emerald ring, coils of silver wrapping around the oval gem. "Witch made it. It protects me from the sun."

He stopped pacing. "Witches, too? What the hell have I gotten myself into..."

She sat up using her good arm to prop herself. "You bring home some random telekinetic child and, as it appears you're living with her," She paused, raising her brows, "and you're wondering what you got yourself into?!"

He groaned, rolling his eyes as he massaged his face. "Well.... Well you can't stay here then. What am I supposed to do? Feed the kid to you?"

She made a disgusted face, although his suggestion wasn't completely out of wack. "God! No. I try not to feed on.... Well—the living."

He fake gagged, cringing as he turned away from Naomi. "Whatever,

let's just stop talking about it then. You've got a day then to heal up the get the hell out of here, alright?"

"Yes sir," She replied in a condescending tone, "Would need to grab a meal anyways."

"Gross." He scoffed, "So what you eat rabbit's and stuff."

"No! N-No. I take blood from hospital's. I don't have to explain myself to you anyways."

"We saved your life—"

"And I saved hers." She regarded towards the bathroom, where she head squeaks coming from skin in contact with the porcelain. "Bottom line is I'll be out of here in a few hours anyways. I just need a chance to heal..." She moaned again a an ache ran through her. She rolled her arms back, groaning, and flipped her legs over the side of the bed.

"And a good shower."

She rolled her eyes again.

"So what's up with her, then?" She stretched her legs out, clasping to the bed as she pointed out her toes. "I thought she might be a witch.... But—I can usually sense that. And they're normally with others. A witch coven. She's stronger. Much stronger."

He let out a soft chuckle, "Kid saved our asses. She saved all of us..."

Naomi frowned, "I don't understand."

He threw a crooked smile at her, "Long story short: She was kidnapped the day she was born and raised in National Laboratory a few miles from here. They locked her up and experimented on her like some kind of... animal." She saw him grit his teeth, his jaw clenching. "I saw where they kept her. It was terrible. Tiny room, tiny bed. No blankets... It was abuse, is what it was."

Naomi tried to hide her feelings from Hopper, not wanting to get too attached. The second she gave a fuck, something always happened.

"That's why she's near mute."

Hopper nodded. "No time to teach her, I guess; just wanted to use her powers or whatever."

"So how did she acquire such psychokinetic abilities?"

"The woman who carried her: Terry Ives her name was. She took part in some stupid studies for money. She took a whole bunch of drugs to 'expand the boundaries of the mind'" He finger quoted. "Little did she know, she was pregnant at the time. It affected the little squirt."

"Damn," Naomi stood up, stretching the rest of her body. She felt bad for the girl. She could see her arm lazily hanging over the edge of the bathtub through the crack in the door. Her nails still caked with blood, her fingers; covered in scratches from wandering the forest. "And how do you tie in to all of this?"

He pressed his tongue into the side of his cheek again, his brows drawing together. "November 6th, 1983 a kid went missing in the middle of the night. Will Byers, was his name."

Will Byers.

She knew that name. She had seen it somewhere... She thought back to the night before at the diner, before she was up to her elbows in her own bloody insides.

She obsessively tapped her fingers against the wooden table, her grossly un-manicured nails touching the table, one finger after the other. She took a sip of the stale coffee—the third one she had drunken during that day.

Human food tasted like plastic—for the most part. Coffee did the trick to keep her awake, though. She like it warm-it wasn't as viscous as blood as it went down, but it had a similar elated feeling as it passed through her stomach.

She bit her lip, her eyes flickering from person to person. There weren't many left in the diner. 3 or 4, maybe.

There was an older, overweight gentlemen sitting at the bar with her, 3 seats over. He had just started his meal which consisted of a double

cheeseburger and fries. He drowned his burger with ketchup, and she made a small retching noise as the scent of sugary tomatoes filled her nostrils.

Behind her, a young couple looked at their menus, giggling every so often. Two booths from the door, another gentlemen waited in silence, his eyes drifting to the news casting on the television above her. She tossed a lock of chocolate hair behind her shoulder, and pushed her empty mug towards the waitress, "One more, please." She requested.

The waitress nodded.

Quiet nights like this, alone at a diner drinking overpriced coffee, were dangerous for her. She liked to imagine, if she still fed live, who she would go for in situations like this.

She looked at the big man next to her. HE wouldn't last long, which would be less of a struggle, but she could practically taste the cholesterol just looking at him.

Her eyes wandered to the blonde waitress, moving hastily in her tight clothes as she handed the fat-man his orange juice. She was much too tiny. Couldn't get enough out of her.

The couple would make the most noise, and last the longest... but worth it. Two birds with one stone. They were always the easiest to trap, one significant other hanging around while you fed on the other.

The noise of the bells ringing at the entrance was as thunderous to her as a gun shot in the middle of the night.

The door squeaked as a middle aged woman with cropped hair, a fringe centering her face, walked in. She gave a polite smile to the waitress, "Oh I'm not eating anything... Sorry. Thank you." She held a stack of papers closer to her chest, taking a few steps towards a bulletin board on the wall beside the bar.

She removed a tac from an old paper, placing it back on the board, and grabbed the piece of paper, staring at it much too longingly.

"Have you seen me?" It read, with the name **Will Byers** underneath it.

A small boy, 12 maybe, was plastered to the ad. He had a bright smile and a noticeable bowl cut.

She added the paper to her pile, and left the store again

"He got abducted on his way home from a friend's house. It was dark, he was riding his bike. Kid panicked—rode off the road and crashed. Few days later, found his body in the Quarry."

"What so weird about that," Naomi asked, moving over to the couch.

"Only it wasn't really his body. It was a fake."

Naomi raised an eyebrow.

"It was the laboratory, they sent someone in claiming they were from state to do the autopsy. Turns out the body was a fake filled with freakin' teddy bear stuffing." He cleared his throat, looking up at Naomi from couch as she wandered around the cabin, picking items up and putting them back down. "I get a call from the boy's mother saying she's hearing him in the walls, that he's trying to talk to her through the lights and something's trying to get him."

"Shit," She commented.

"I figure out the body's fake, break in to the lab, and find some sort of.... Passageway. To something... I don't know. Like another dimension. The kids' call it The Upside Down."

"The kids?" He waved her off, averting the new branch of topic. "Are you fucking with me or something? I gotta tell you, I'm a big fan of Stephen King and I haven't heard of this novel."

"This isn't a joke," he hissed at her, grimacing. "I gave you your time to talk, and if you don't wanna hear it then why'd you ask."

She let out a small chuckle, picking up a framed photo in her hands. It was of a four or five year old girl. She was blonde, large eyes. She had a bright smile on her face as she sat in a pile of discarded leaves. "Go on, sorry chief." She dropped the photo.

He grumbled something to himself that Naomi didn't pay attention

to. "Please no blood on the couch," He held a cautious hand out to her, as she moved to sit on it.

She shot him a dissatisfied look, and jumped when she used her speed to quickly grab a sheet of the bed and place it underneath her. "I'm not even gonna ask," He stated, in reference to her blur of a run.

"Long story short, Eleven escapes from Hawkins Lab, ends up sleeping in some kid's basement while I'm running around looking for the Byers kid. I'm trying to chase him, but I end up chasing her."

"What was his name?" Hopper made another discerning face, "The kid's house she stayed at. What was his name?"

"Mike."

The voice comes from behind them, startling them both. They both stare with wide eyes as Eleven gives them the most depressing look they've both ever seen.

"Get to bed, El. It's late. We'll set up all the traps I was talking about in the morning, okay?"

She nods, her hand running through her cropped, wet hair.

"Those bad men aren't gonna find ya."

Again, she nods, before returning to her bedroom and shutting the door. Like before, she leaves a small crack open.

Hopper turns back to Naomi, only this time his voice is much lower.

"So Mike, his friends, and Eleven are out searching for Will as well. I guess this... interdimensional passageway of sorts was sort of opened by her during an experiment—and this... this monster—I'm not really sure what else to call it—it dips in and out of our world and it starts taking people... The kid's mom and I go into the 'Upside Down'" he finger quotes again, "And Eleven's holding off this thing at the middle school. She saved our asses, all of our asses, but we couldn't find her after she defeated it. It took her under before she killed it. She told me she came back through a hole in the middle school, a few weeks later I see her wandering the forest with you." He pats the sofa, "and

here we are."

"Shit," She says again, to which Hopper glares at her for the increase in volume. "Sorry..." she mutters. "And what's your big plan, then?" she shifted on the couch, holding a hand over the wound that seems to throb despite her lack of a beating heart. "Hide her here until things die down?"

He shrugged, "I suppose so. If that's what it takes."

"You don't think she's gonna go out of her mind all alone again?"

"I mean—"

"What will you do when you're at work?"

"She's not a dog, Naomi." It was the first time he had said her name, and it made her feel... like they were acquaintances. She didn't like that. "She's potty trained."

"You can't just... just keep her here."

"Well where else is she gonna go?"

Naomi clenched her jaw, laying back on the red couch. "Touché." She ran a hand threw her long locks. "You're serious about this, hey?"

He gave her a ridiculed look, his eyes blinking repeatedly. "I didn't question you being a... a stupid vampire!"

She sat up, her back arching straight, and closed her eyes. She flashed her eyes open, a bright burning red taking over her irises. Small, deep veins crept down underneath her eyes, and her eye teeth protruded into long points.

"Jesus!" he shoed her away, standing up from the couch and whirling around it. "I said I believed you!"

She chuckled, "Just making sure. You didn't at first."

He walked to the kitchen, opening his fridge to grab a beer. It made a loud buzz after he shut it, and he kicked it with his foot to make it

stop. He walked to the opposite side, opening a drawer, and grabbed a bottle opener.

"Man; witches, werewolves, vampires... what else is out there?"

She rotated her body so she could lay vertical on the couch. Hop popped the cap off the beer, and there was a 'clink' as the metal lid hit the counter.

"Banshees, hellhounds, ghosts, angels, demons—"

"Ever heard of a rhetorical question?" He interrupted in a disdainful tone of voice.

"Whatever," she trailed off, curling her legs up onto a spread eagle position on the couch.

"Yeah, go ahead. Make yourself at home." His lips made a slurping noise as he took a sip from his beer.

She sighed, shaking her head.

He sighed too.

"What?" She asked. She couldn't see him from the angled position she was on the couch, but she could sense he was right behind her.

"You're right," he sighed again. "I mean—I can't just leave her here when I'm working... I can't exactly quit my job either."

"What were you planning to do?" she rolled on her back, looking up at him.

He sucked in his bottom lip, his eyes squinting as he looked ahead. "I hadn't got there yet." There was a long pause as he drifted off into space. "Nevermind." He shook his head. "You should wash off. I'll change the sheets and clean up after you."

"Got it, sir." She teased, rising from the couch.

"Shut up."

She couldn't sleep. She tossed and turned in the squeaky bed, and her wounds made it difficult for her to get comfy—but they were healing. Her sleep schedule was off from the long nap she had had after her attack. The light snore coming from the police chief on the couch made it even more difficult.

Then, there was the ticking clock from Eleven's room. Tik tok tik tok tik tok.

The loathsome drip of the faucet in the kitchen made her eye twitch, and the sound of the buzzing fridge again made her want to rip her ears.

It was so much different then where she was used to sleeping.

The noises were so different, because she wasn't alone for once.

Two sets of lungs, two sets of hearts.

For once, it didn't smell like urine and booze, like the motels she was used to. Hopper smelt musky, like the forest. He had this cheap cologne scent to him too, and she had described how wonderful El smelt.

She tucked the blanket close to her chin, looking up at the ceiling. Her eyes made metaculus patterns in the swirls of the wood.

At least she wasn't alone anymore.

Thanks for the reviews and follows I have so far :)

3. Chapter 3: Stay

A/N Another chapter! I promise the next few chapter's will mainly be about Eleven and Naomi. So... stay tuned. A small spoiler: She's gonna ask Hopper to bring Dracula home on VHS so the two can watch it, so she can explain to ELeven what she is... kinda. It'll be super cute and sister-y.

Her hands clawed at her captor as she was lifted into the air. She struggled to stay grounded and the enormous strength of the subjugator was something she couldn't even bargain with. One hand around her chin, thumb and middle finger pressing the side's of her face to keep her jaw forced ajar, while the other hand looped over her chest and strangled her neck.

Her body trembling, her heart pounding, and her lungs racing. Her eyebrows shot up as he strengthened his grip around her neck. She gasped for air, hoping for any millisecond of release to keep her alive.

"She's a feisty one, aye. I thought you said she wanted this?" His voice was husky and his British accent was very prominent.

"Well... S-She was having doubts on the way here." Theodore crossed his arms over his clothed chest.

His grip loosened for a moment, to let her speak. "Theo," She whimpered, her eyes locking with her brothers. They weren't the same as she remembered.... He had changed. The shift did that to people. His eyes were once blue as the sky, filled with love, appreciation, and positivity for the world. She brought out the best him. Where she dwelled on negatives, he picked out the good. His heart had no remorse the past few weeks, though. His eyes were now bleak. The ruby that possessed his eyes now, were not his. Not in the slightest. The blue that was left was cold.

He killed without repentance. He murdered innocents to stay animate, and guilt wasn't something he felt subsequently. 'It's only to survive, Naomi,' he promised her, 'It's just the circle of life.' He elucidated, as if the situation was something as easy as prey and predator on Nat Geo.

She remembered listening to his story of how he turned. What she couldn't fathom was that he wanted it. Maybe the death of their mother had kicked him harder than she thought. Did he really want eternal life? To survive only through the death of others? To be 21 forever?

He had researched vampires since their mother's illness caved in. He had become obsessed with the idea of eternal life. He tracked down a series of deaths in Chicago, the autopsy report claiming their bodies had been dry as the desert.

His mania with the paranormal drew to an end when he met Jasper Flemming; charming 104 year old brit in the body of a 30 year old. He was powerful... much more than most vampires. He had covens all over North America and Europe. He was an alpha, in a sense. He turned her brother the second the question left his lips.

'We can be together again,' her brother had promised, 'no secrets anymore. It's easy, I promise. It'll be like when we were younger, the Cross twins: Invincible.'

She wanted to believe him, she did, and that's what got here here in the first place.

Truth be told, she was scared. She didn't know what else life had in store for her. No parents, a runaway brother... no schooling behind her name. But being here, in Jasper's arms near death, she knew one thing: She definitely did not want this.

She didn't know how he had even convinced her to leave the house. She told him she didn't wanna come. He promised that he would just introduce himself to them, that's it.

"Theo, please..." her voice was barely a whisper as she struggled for oxygen. "I don't want this." Her voice cracked as she whizzed in another labored breath. "I don't want to be like you..."

"Ha!" Jasper startled her. "I have other's lined up begging to be turned by me. To be in my bloody coven."

"I-I don't..."

"Nay!" It was a nickname Theo used often when they were younger. He couldn't pronounce the it correctly so he started calling her gnome-y, and her mother had insisted on just settling on Nay, so it was easier for him to say—and it stuck. "Nay, listen to me. It'll be fine, alright? We'll be fine. I'll help you with the cravings—the hunger."

"You said it would be easy..." She whimpered, tears streaming down her face.

"It'll be the hardest bloody thing you've ever done, sweetheart," Jasper shot her a condescending smirk, one that chilled her to her core. She filled with trepidation, watching as the man's eyes possessed the same red color as her brothers, only darker. More aged. More evil.

"Let me go..." She muttered, spit drooling down the sides of her chin as she coughed. "Let me go! Let me go. Let me GO!" She thrashed about, her legs wind milling in every direction, hoping for a moment of weakness for him to give way.

"No can do, young lady." In a swift notion, he placed his hand back on her jaw, forcing it open, while the other arm rose to his lips. He bit into his wrist with sickening squish, and forced it to her mouth. "Drink, bitch."

She cried, forceful tears making their way down their face as blood poured into her mouth, gushing onto her tongue and down her throat. She gagged, her eyes bulging.

The taste was foul. One hand clung to his, to keep her hoisted for air. The other tried to remove his vice on her jaw. The century old vampire didn't even come close to a match for her, though.

He dropped her to the ground once she had ingested enough blood, and she landed with a light 'thump' on the concrete. She wiped her bloody face with her knitted sleeve, trying to remove any trace of the blood that was left. She spat onto the floor, gagging as she tried to retch out the crimson liquid.

"No use, dollface," She heard a woman from behind her. "S'too late."

She turned around, facing the younger woman. Naomi scowled at her, tears still blurring her vision.

"Naomi. It will be better from now on, I promise. Like I said; no more secrets." Her brother reassured, flying over to her and placing a hand on her shoulder.

She flinched at the quick movement. She started at him in disgust. Her lips curled back, and she wiped the tears from her eyes. "Don't...." She paused, swallowing. "Don't touch me." She growled at him.

He leisurely removed his hand from her shoulder; brow's knitting together in confusion.

She heard the heels of Jasper's shoes click towards her. She was too afraid to look up. "Just one more step, darling."

"You're gonna make it quick, right?" her brother looked up at the alpha vampire.

Her eyes curiously drifted upwards when he didn't reply right away. She wasn't surprised to see that his eyes were already locked with hers. "Of course." He lied through clenched teeth, "Quick and painless."

She didn't want to die. She wasn't ready to die. She didn't want eternal life! She just wanted to be normal. Her brother wasn't the same... She didn't want to do this for him.

His lips pursed together as he leered in.

Sweat beaded down her forehead as her eyes darted from the barn door, to Jasper, her brother, the woman, the rest of the coven, and back to the door. Everything slowed as her anxiety kicked. She sure as hell wouldn't make it through this—but if there was one thing her mother taught her, it was too put up a damn good fight.

So she ran.

She jolted from her slumber, sweat-drenched sheets holding her prisoner in the bed. Her breathing labored, her head pounding, and her hands gripping the sheets.

"Morning, Dracula."

Her head regarded to Hopper, who was at the front door putting on a

green bomber jacket.

She sighed.

"What, not happy to see my pretty face this late in the day?" his brows rose, and he let out a soft chuckle.

She rolled her eyes, pulling the sheets off of her as she removed herself from the bed.

"El, come on. I'll show you how to set up the traps!" he called to the bedroom, his hand cupping around his mouth. He zipped his jacket up and did a little quick jog to the table. He picked up a few supplies. Mouse traps, fishing wire, a hammer, pliers; some other stuff that she disregarded as well.

She raised a brow.

He shrugged, "Just some precautions."

Eleven came strutting out the bedroom in dark pants, a beige shirt, and an oversized brown jacket with a fur collar.

"Hello," she nodded at Naomi.

Naomi smiled at her. "Hey, Eleven." The girl was sweet, it made her heart melt. She had some sort of appreciation for the girl that had risked her life to ensure her safety. "I never got to thank either of you, for saving me." She paused, biting her lip, "Thank you both. Seriously." She could tell that they could sense her uneasiness. Being nice, thanking people—it wasn't usually her forte... "I'd be dead right now if it weren't for the both of you."

Hopper gave her a pert smile. "Don't mention it, Nosferatu." He replied cheekily, "You comin'?"

She rolled her eyes again at his comment. It was becoming a common action in this house. "Nah. I'm just gonna change my bandages. Thanks, though."

"Let's go, El," Hopper nodded towards the door with the smile.

Eleven gave Naomi her 'almost-smile' and followed Hopper out the door.

She watched from the window as the Chief led her down the porch steps. Eleven trailed behind him, hands in pocket, as he found a pair of trees a good distance apart.

She listened in.

"So we just place this guy here..." He nailed a mousetrap to a tree, facing towards the house. He walked around to another tree a few feet away, *"And this guy here."* He hammered another mouse trap.

He grabbed his coil of fishing wire, tying it onto one tree, then moving around to the other. Eleven followed him closely, like a puppy.

He knelt down in the fresh snow, looking at Eleven, *"Here, give me those."*

Naomi watched as Eleven pulled out a pair of pliers and handed them to Hopper. Hopper cut the wire from the coil, and set them on the ground.

"So this is called a trip wire. It's like an alarm." She could see him fiddling with the wire. *"You, uh, you set it up like this."* He placed the end of the wire, in a small loop now, on the mouse trap nailed to the tree. He pulled the wire back, and relaxed in the snow. *"And if anybody gets close it's gonna make a loud noise, like gunfire."* He paused, *"BANG!"*

Eleven jumped slightly, her head darting back.

Hopper let out a small chuckle, placing his arm behind Eleven.

Eleven studied the trap, fascinated by it. She leered in as she assessed it, and Hopper smiled, wiping his face with his hand. He sighed, glancing around at the freshly fallen snow. *"Those bad men aren't gonna find ya."* He stated on a more serious note.

Eleven looked away, and Naomi could hear her pulse pick up.

"Okay?" he continued, *"Not way the hell out here."* He looked down at her, while her eyes remained on her hands, fiddling with a loose thread on the jacket. *"We'll take some precautions. There's gonna be some ground rules, alright?"*

Naomi moved from the window, moving to the first aid kit laid out on the kitchen counter, her ears still eavesdropping.

She heard them shuffle outside, their boots scuffing the forest floor. Seconds later, she heard the familiar creak of the porch's first step.

"Number one: Always keep the curtains drawn."

He paused.

"Number two: Only open the door if you hear my secret knock."

Again, another pause. He knocked twice against the wooden stairs, then did one long knock, followed by three quick knocks.

"Number three: Don't ever go out alone. Especially not in the daylight."

Naomi tuned out of the conversation, as they spiraled into much deeper topics about her days in the forest prior to Hopper finding her.

She removed the bandage over her heart, and winced when she saw the crusted scab beneath it. It was healing, just slowly.

She removed the stained bandage, tossing it in the trash underneath sink. She split open a packet of antibacterial gauze, and used it to clean around the edges of the wound. She grabbed another bandage from the rusted box, and taped it with medical tape over her chest.

She flipped her arm over to assess the nasty gash from the stake entering her arm.

She groaned as she removed that one, the medical tape sticking to the fragile skin around it. She replaced that one as well, and dropped the used medical supplies in the trash. She washed her hands in the kitchen sink, which took a little too long to turn on, and when it did: gushed a little too much water.

When she searched for a towel to dry off, the pair walked in. She just shook her hands dry, giving up on her hunt.

"When will I see Mike?" She asked, stomping her boots against the black floor mat by the door.

"Soon," he promised her, removing her jacket, "We just have to wait a while. We need to wait for things to calm down."

"How long?" She pressed, unlacing her boots.

"I'm not sure, Eleven. Soon." He repeated, "I've been going to the lab every Monday with Joyce and Will. There's a new head doc, there. I have to make progress with him first. Sound good, kid?"

She nodded dejectedly, and shuffled to the couch.

She sat on the couch, curling her knees to her chest and wrapping her arms around them. She stared at the wall opposite to her, by her room.

Naomi frowned as the Chief walked over to her.

He shrugged in response. "How's the wounds healing up?" he questioned, eyeing her newly bandaged body.

She cocked her head to the side, resting her arm on the counter. "It's getting there. Just gotta wait it out, I suppose."

He nodded, moving past her to place a kettle on the gas stove.

"I got a surprise for you tomorrow, El."

She perked up from the couch; hugging her legs tighter to her chest.

"I'll bring the television over from my place. Got some brain teasers and stuff as well. We can't just sit here until you get to see Mike, can we?"

Her face perked up at the mention of the boy's name, and she inhaled, straightening.

"I doubt you learned much in that hell hole—besides how to fight maybe. I'll bring some paper and pencils and stuff and we can teach you some proper education. Sound good?"

Naomi cocked a brow at the 'we'. It was just a slip up of words, right? She didn't want to get attached. Didn't want to get her hopes up. To be quite frank, she adored the dysfunctional situation Eleven and Hopper had gotten themselves into. It was like a cheesy sit com. She couldn't stay much longer. She would have to leave by tonight, that's what Hopper had said.

She would be on the run again, in a few hours.

"Hey, Hop. Do you have a map?"

"Yeah," he nodded, not looking at her as he poured the boiling water into a coffee cup. "Why?"

She leaned against the table, staring at the officer as he stirred his spoon inside his coffee cup.

"I should probably start my game plan." She pursed her lips as she stretched out over the counter, resting her chin on it. "Gotta hit up a few places outside of town before I make a run for it."

"Oh..." He scratched the disheveled mess of hair on his head, "Right." He placed the cup of coffee down and paced over to a drawer beside the kitchen sink. He started fumbling through it before pulling out a dusty pamphlet. "Here," he tossed it her way, sliding it on the counter

It skidded to a stop beside her right arm, and she picked it up.

"Thanks," She moved to lay it out flat on the dining table.

"The hunters are that fast, hey?" he asked her, taking a long slurp of his coffee, after placing two cream and a spoonful of sugar. "Can't stay a night in a motel or something?"

She shook her head, flattening out the edges of the thin paper with her palms. "They'll find me. Those shit heads are good. Once, they searched every store in a small town just outside Philly small to see who had bought a pair of Doc Martin's that day because they had

found a track in the woods. On a summer day. In one muddy puddle. They questioned everyone in the store about which way they had saw my exit, security footage, etc., And damn bastards found me, they did."

"Holy shit." He stared at her, eyes unblinking.

"Yup," Her fingers trailed across a small route that went through Hawkins.

"How do they get information out of them?"

Naomi licked her lips, grabbing a scrap piece of paper from the kitchen counter and jotting a few notes down. "They've got an inside team. They dress up in fancy suits and go in with fake FBI badges claiming they're out of state looking for a murderer. Anybody questions it, they call the number on the badge and some other hunter picks up claiming he's their superior."

"Are you leaving?" El asks, interrupting their conversation. El walked over to her, hands folded in front of her neatly.

Naomi looks at the kid, nodding dishearteningly. "I gotta keep moving, or the bad men. They'll get me..." She explains to her.

"Hmph." She's not quite mad, but she's not quite happy either. She crosses one arm over her body, her hand holding her elbow, and she shuffled to her room. Before she steps through the frame of the door, she paused, darting towards the bookshelf and grabbing a radio.

Before she shut the door completely, she flashes them her almost-smile. For the first time, Naomi watched her close the bedroom door completely.

She turned to Hopper, and he just rolled his eyes, dropping his empty coffee cup in the sink. "She's going to visit Mike."

"The Wheeler kid?" Naomi questioned, standing up from the table and crossing her arms over her chest.

"Yeah." He nodded, "They've got some sort of special bond. Kid spends a week and a half cooped up in a fort in his basement and

somehow tween love blossoms."

Naomi bit her lip, "She mentioned him when we were in the forest together, said she couldn't go there."

"Probably wants to protect him," he conjectured "They had police officers, higher officials, and doctors at their house for days. They were questioning them all, making them sign forms so they wouldn't say anything. The kids are supposed to tell them it was some Russian girl that showed up at their house in the middle of the night. That's what Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler believe too."

"They didn't know?" she asked.

He shook his head, pursing his lips. "They had no idea, quote, 'They never set foot in that basement'".

She exhaled a breath she hadn't known she was holding. "No wonder they have some sort of special bond, then."

"Yeah," Hopper agreed, "It was one of the first faces she saw outside Hawkins lab, that didn't end up with a bullet between their eyes."

Naomi bit her lip. "So what do you mean, visiting Mike?"

Hopper exhaled through his nostrils. "She uses radio frequencies, static, things like that. She taps into it and uses it connect and find people. She can find them with just a photo, or an image of them in her mind. She can see what they're doing, what they're saying. It's not always pleasant, though. Sometimes she can talk back—but I told her it's not safe. Not yet. If he knew she was out here he'd go berserk."

"Is that how you found the Byers boy?"

He nodded.

"This is some MKUltra aftershock hey?"

"You have no idea," He countered.

He sighed, walking around the kitchen counter. "So what's the plan Stan?" he pointed to the map. "Maybe I can help you out."

"I'd like that," She smiled.

"So how old are you really?" They had been bantering back and forth, asking each other questions and for the most part being sarcastic assholes. It was some sort of twisted father-daughter way. It made her heart warm, and she had laughed more in the past day than she ever had in the last three years.

"24," She answered from the couch, her chin resting on the headrest while she watched Hopper and Eleven pick at their microwaved dinner. Eleven seemed extremely uninterested in the vegetables. She stabbed at the peas with the prongs of her fork. "But I'm frozen at 21. That's when I turned."

"Yeah, and I'm a 20 year old in a 48 year old body, can you tell?"

She rolled her eyes.

"Eat, kid," Hopper waved at Eleven with his fork. "Peas are good for you, give you better eyesight."

"That's carrots." Naomi argued.

"Shut up," He shot back hastily, "You don't even eat."

She snorted, folding her arms underneath her chin. "I did."

"So how do you become a vampire?" he asked.

She gulped. She wasn't sure how to answer this, especially with Eleven in the room. By the sounds of it, though, death was something Eleven was familiar with.

"You have to ingest the blood of a vampire,"

"Oh," He mumbled reluctantly, a mouthful of chicken in his mouth. His tone was as if to say 'Oh, not the bad'.

She cleared her throat, "And then you have to die."

He choked on the piece of dried chicken his mouth. "**Oh.**"

She shrugged, turning away and feeling embarrassed from her bluntness.

He didn't ask any questions regarded her undeadness after that. Instead, he changed the subject talking to Eleven about the things he was going to grab for her after work tomorrow from his other house. It seemed to excite her, the mention of puzzles, paper, brain teasers; the television.

"Go on, kid." He patted Eleven's arm, "That's good enough." She nodded, shutting her eyes. She grabbed both Hopper and her's plate, peas still rolling around like loose marbles, and she dropped them in the sink.

"I'm going to brush my teeth and then sleep." She stated.

Hopper nodded, "Good plan, El." He stood from the table, sipping on his glass of water. "I'm at work early tomorrow so I'll try not to wake you."

She stared, unblinking, then darted into the washroom, again, door not fully shut.

Naomi stood from the couch, walking around the small living room. She picked up a few old books from the bookshelf, analyzing them. "You cleaned this place up pretty good in a week, hey?"

"Yeah," he chuckled in disbelief, "Eleven helped a ton. Tried to bring a few things from my house in town, make it more home-y" he emphasized the last word, his lips curling into an o-shape.

"It's real nice of you, you know. To give her a home and all since she's never really had one." Naomi shuffled to a wooden shoe rack by the door, picking up a pack of smokes that were there, and a lighter. "Do you mind?" she asked, pulling out a single cigarette. "Helps the cravings."

He shook his head.

Naomi opened the door slightly, allowing the cold night breeze to pour in. She lit the cigarette, one hand cupping to protect it from the wind, and dropped the lighter back on the shoe rack.

"If not me, then who?" He asked rhetorically, "She doesn't talk about what it was like at the lab. Probably too scared of me, still. The room she slept in was barely bigger than our washroom. A bed, a lamp, and some stupid cheetah teddy. That's it." He slammed his hand against the counter.

Naomi took a puff of her cigarette, inhaling longer than needed.

"They would test her, day in, day out. Make her kill animals... Force her to look for Ex-con's and what not. They'd over work her. I saw their tape files on Eleven. They'd put her in sensory deprivation tanks, mess with her frequencies and what not. That's how that stupid rift was opened to the upside down. She's like a battery. She needs to recharge, but they never recharged her." He sighed, looking away from Naomi. "I remember seeing this one photo. It was a drawing taped to the wall in the room they kept her in. It was stick figures of her and Dr. Brenner. Art much below her age level... but that's not the point. She labeled it 'Papa'. She used to call the sick bastard her 'Papa' because that's what he made her do."

She took another drag of her cigarette, her eyes drifting out into the inky blackness of the night. No snow, tonight, but it was nipier than usual. "She was scared, earlier today."

"Hmm?" She heard from the kitchen.

"She was scared, when you were setting the traps up. I heard her pulse pick up when you mentioned 'the bad men'" She quoted, holding the lit cigarette between her pointer and middle finger. She crossed one arm over her chest. "She's really scared of these guys."

Hopper gnawed at the dead skin on his chapped lip, his eyes coasting to the floor. "I don't blame her. She didn't listen, they'd look her in an airtight room, no lights, no nothing. Barely room to stand in. Like a closet."

"Damn," She took another drag, "How do people get away with stuff like that?"

They went quite as Eleven exited the washroom and made her way to her bedroom.

Naomi finished her cigarette, flicking the bud into the snow. She shut the door, locking all six bolts and padlocks, and turned back to Hopper, who had a perplexing look on his face.

"What?" She asked, "What is it?"

"Nothing. Well, actually. I was thinking about what you said about leaving her home alone." He nodded towards her bedroom, where the light was now off.

"Yeah?"

"I was just thinking, you know, considering you're hiding from those hunters. It might be better if you lay low for a while too; stay here. At least until you completely heal."

She smiled, sighing. "You know, Hop, as much as I would like to stay here with a sarcastic asshole and a telekinetic teen, it's not fair to either of you."

"Truth be told," he sighed, "I'm scared. I dunno how to take care of the kid... Not after Sa—I mean...I think she'll go out of her freaking mind here all by herself. I need to work... otherwise how would I pay for her stupid eggos? Not to mention this town would go to shit."

"Hop, what if I put you guys in more danger?"

He lifted a finger, "I thought about that, I did." He moved around the counter, taking a few steps towards her until they were face to face. "You two can pretty much take care of yourself, right? There's also a bajillion locks on the door. I think it'd be best if the same rules I told her would apply to you. At least for a little bit. If you decide to leave later... that's your choice. As long as you don't put her in danger."

"And the blood?" Naomi mentioned, "The hospital's the number one place they'll be searching for me."

"What if I go?"

She raised her brows. "That could work. I mean, no one would question your authority since you're the Chief. The Winchester's won't be searching for you..."

"So?" his eyes grew wide as he gave her an apprehensive look, arms lifting in the air.

"So: yeah... I guess." She nodded. "But I have one question..."

"Shoot," He encouraged her.

"Why not tell the others? Mrs. Byers, the Wheeler kid?"

His jaw clenched, and he grinded his teeth together. "It's not safe. It's still too soon. They see a buzzcut girl running around town, they'll know it's her. It's not that I don't trust them... it's just easier if they don't know."

She nodded, her eyes drifting from the Chief.

"You don't think it's a good idea?" He asked.

She shrugged, "No, I mean—I don't know. It's your call, Jim." Her shoulders shrugged back again and she slapped two hands against her thighs. "S'your call." She repeated.

"Yeah..." He exhaled through flared nostrils, his eyes falling to the ground. "'My call'" he imitated, "I hate things are when my freaking call."

A/N: No reviews from my last chapter, but a few new followers so thank you! This was kind of a filler chapter, because Hopper wasn't just gonna let her stay there from the get-go. Please tell me what you think, and what you wanna see. I have a few things planned out, like mentioned about, since El and Naomi are gonna spend a lot of time together. Eventually it will meet up with S2 but I'll change a few things: for example... Naomi and Hop get into a fight and Naomi takes EL trick or treating despite the Chief's wishes.

Enjoy :) And thanks for reading.

4. Chapter 4: Dream Catcher

Hello! Thank you for tuning in again. It mean's the world to me. See you at the bottom, and apologies in advance for a short chapter.

P.S if you wanna add a little bit of spice to your life, listen to Outside the Realm by Big Giant Circles, because that's what I listened to when writing this!

"I don't get it," Eleven munched on the eggo, between her hands like a rabbit nibbling a carrot. As usual, her legs were folded in front of her as she sat on the couch facing the television. Hopper had brought over the television and set it up for them before his night shift, which wasn't a shift he worked often.

Along with television, as a 'welcoming gift' (what he had called it when he gave it to her) he gave them the 1979 Dracula.

"So this is supposed to be you?"

"No," Naomi snorted, on the opposite end of the coach. "It's just a joke. Well.... Like I'm kinda like that."

"No garlic?" She asked, to which Naomi smiled. Her shortened sentences were amusing, despite the sad reality of why she spoke like that.

She shrugged, "I'm not gonna die if I touch, no. I don't eat food like you guys, though."

"No sun?" She frowned, her face scrunching up.

Naomi held up her ringed hand, "I'm protected from it from this ring."

She cocked her head, "Sleeping?" She pointed to the Dracula, erecting pin straight from the coffin.

She licked her lips, trying to hide her smile. "No," She exhaled a held in laugh, "I don't sleep in coffins. In fact, Hopper wanted me to run

something by you."

She nibbled on her Eggo waffle again, munching small bites of it between her teeth as she looked back at the television. "And you have to drink blood to survive?"

Naomi sulked into the couch, resting her chin on her fist, with her elbow propped up. "Wish I didn't have to."

She didn't reply, which was nice. She didn't judge her for it, nor did she fake a response that made it seem okay.

"Are you alright if I pull up an air mattress in your room for a little bit? Just until I decide to leave... or get kicked out."

"Air mattress?"

She saw that coming. She answered with a smirk, "It's like what you sleep on, only it's filled with air instead of fluff and springs."

"A balloon."

"Basically," She shrugged her shoulders back, "Yeah."

"Oh," She took another bite, chewing as she talked, "Well yeah. I don't like to be alone when I sleep anyways..."

"How come?" While her eyes were pinned on Eleven, El's were glued to the TV. It was her new holy grail. She had told Naomi that she had seen them before, and that they fascinated her. She liked to change the channels with her mind instead of going up to the television.

She watched as Eleven fisted her jeans, her knuckles turning white. "I dream of my Papa."

Naomi froze, her eyes bulging from her forehead. She trotted over to the television, turning down the volume. As she walked back to the couch, leisurely, she spoke. "Do you want to talk about your Papa?"

Eleven finished the last bite of her Eggo, dusting the crumbs off her hand, and leaned back in the couch. Her fingers locked together around her knees, and she rocked back and forth a little. "I'm... not

sure."

"Oh! Well you don't have to." *Stupid* she thought, *stupid, stupid, stupid*. Eleven had spent her whole life obeying adults, doing things she was uncomfortable she was doing. She shouldn't have to spill her guts just to fuel Naomi's curiosity. "I thought it might help, that's all. I mean—you don't have to."

"It's okay," She changes her mind and she sat up in the couch. Her knees dropped, and her hands folded in her lap. "It's grey. Blood. Like here, but evil. Papa is there, in blood. He tells me I'm wounded... I'm sick. He tells me I'm very sick. That I caused this." She started to whimper, and her voice cracked. "A-And then the Demogorgon.... He get's everyone."

Demogorgon... That must have been the monster Hop had told her about, that came from the Upside Down.

Eleven continued, without looking at her still. Naomi scooched closer to her, seeing her fragile body tremble with trepidation.

"Papa is mad. He's very mad and he locks me up in the dark room. I scream and scream and scream, I break the walls with my mind, but I can never get through. And Papa just laughs..."

She's crying now. Not sobbing, but there are evident tears leaving wet trails down her face. Naomi wraps an arm around her, startling Eleven. Eleven doesn't move, but Naomi forcefully curled her body into her side. "El, it's not your fault. You know that, right?"

El's lips curled back, and her voice gets caught in her throat in a wad of saliva. "I did... I opened it."

She shook her head. "I wasn't there, but I know. You were forced by your Papa, Eleven."

"No mike... Dustin or Lucas then. I didn't know." Her words start to falter, but it was easy of Naomi to keep up. She was trying to explain that she didn't know about them then, didn't know it was bad.

Naomi squeezes her tighter into her side, "Hey, kid. Don't worry about it... Not your fault."

"It is..."

This kid was stubborn, and for a reason. Not only did Dr. Brenner, her Papa, define her youth and upbringing, he was basically responsible for her existing after testing on Terry Ives. Dr. Brenner was her only social engagement.. The only one who hugged her gave her discipline. 'Loved' her. She depended on the man for attention, because that's all she got to thrive on. When she got out of that prison, she experienced love for the first time. She saw through her Papa's front.

A stray tear fell down Naomi's face, now. "Not your fault. You hear me, El? Not your fault." She said nothing this time, and maybe if Naomi kept repeating it, Eleven would've believed her. "Is anyone mad at you?"

"Papa would be."

"I don't give a shit about your 'Papa'" She froze, "Don't tell Hop I said that," She shook it off, releasing Eleven "My point is, Eleven, is that his opinion is irrelevant. Now that you're out of that lab, you can realize what people who truly care about you act like. They don't strap you to tables, or make you kill cats. They don't put you in a dark room for time out... They sit, and watch movies with you. They give you a bed, and a place to stay. They feed you Eggos, they let you ride on the back of their bike. They appreciate you."

Eleven nods, and Naomi wasn't sure if she completely understood all of what she was saying, but hoped she got the gist of it.

"Like Hopper said, those bad men aren't gonna get you. Not with us standing in the way." This time, Eleven curls into her side.

"Maybe I'll be like your dream catcher," Naomi continues, "Make all the nightmares go away."

"You can catch dreams, too?" She refers to Naomi's powers, which she hadn't held back on showing Eleven earlier before the movie.

"No, a dreamcatcher. It's like this little craft made of feathers and string and stuff from Native American's. They used to make a little

circle with a web design in the middle and then hang it from their bed. It's supposed to catch the nightmares. It's said that as the first rays of the morning light hit the dream catcher, the bad dreams would disappear."

"Dream catcher..." She tested the words.

"Here...." She sat up from the couch, "Hold on, okay?" Naomi did a quick jog to the door.

Eleven opened her eyes, "No leaving," She warned, repeating Hopper's orders.

Naomi slipped on her boots, "I'll be like three seconds," She exaggerated, "Just stay inside. Lock the door, I'll be back in no time. Okay?"

Eleven swallowed forcefully, sitting in the same fetal position in the couch.

Eleven used her powers to unlock all the bolts on the door, and Naomi slipped outside, shooting Eleven a quick smile before she shut it after her. She heard the locks bolt shut again.

Naomi breathed out a cold exhale of air, seeing her breath dissipate in the freezing temperatures of dusk. She scanned the forest floor for some supplies. This would help her bond with her new roommate for the time being, and maybe it would be like a placebo-effect and making Eleven a dreamcatcher would help with her nightmares.

She grabbed a few sticks, some moldable and bendy. She grabbed a handful of pebbles, finding a particularly polished one that looked greenish in the last light of the sun. The feathers were the hardest to find. She only found two. One was that of a duck, and the other looked like a crow's. They would do, though.

She bolted back to the house with her speed and did Hopper's special knock. Two knocks. Pause, one knock. Pause, three quick knocks.

The locks unbolted, and Naomi flew inside, shutting the door behind her.

Eleven re-locked it as Naomi slipped her boots off, questioning her as she dumped her supplies on the kitchen table. "What are you doing?"

Naomi ignored her, searching for the string and yarn in Hopper's very tiny sewing kit. She managed to find some off white egg-shell color yarn and black string. She sat down on the table and got to work.

She heard Eleven creep behind her, watch her for a moment, and then move around to sit across from her. She was heavily invested in Naomi's quick movements, her hands moving in a flash. They were blurred movements, as Naomi was particularly impatient and liked to use her powers to her advantage.

She started off making a ring sheep with one of the loose branches, and secured it with some twigs and string. She tied the bottom of the loose wood into a somewhat bow. She then took the egg-shell yarn and started to loop around the ring she had made.

Once that was done, she took the yarn and started to twine it to the sides. She pulled the yarn erect, looped it, then pulled it across the ring. She kept weaving the twine around in a square pattern until there was some sort of uneven pattern around it.

As if she had read her mind, Eleven handed Naomi the greenish-color stone. It looked more gray in the dull light of Hopper's grimey colored lamp. She knotted the stone to the middle of the twine and held it up.

It was coming along.

Eleven started to work on her own, too. She tied both feathers to two strings of yarn, and put a pebble on each one about halfway up. She handed them to Naomi, and Naomi tied both strings to the bottom of the ring.

Naomi added a little loop on the top so it could hang up, and then held it up to Eleven.

"There." When she held onto loop, the ring slumped a little looking more oval then round, but it still managed to create a contagious beam upon Eleven's face. She had never seen Eleven smile with teeth,

before.

"Dream catcher?" She asked, although she already knew.

Naomi nodded, a grin plastered to her face as well. She gave it to Eleven to hold. It was only a foot and a half long, or so, but it was good enough for her.

Eleven examined it, twirling it around in her hand like a nursery above a babies crib. "Pretty," She smirked.

Naomi tossed her hair back over her shoulder. "Put it somewhere safe. You're supposed to keep it close to where you sleep, just make sure Hopper doesn't see it or he'll know I opened the door. Ok?"

Eleven nodded, and trotted off towards the bedroom.

Naomi smiled to herself.

She had the power, as a vampire, to smell chemosignals. She couldn't necessary smell... feelings. She could pick up the scent they gave off, though. The scent that drifted from Eleven was joy. Not only was it joyful, but it was carefree. Untroubled.

Something Naomi sensed that Eleven hadn't felt in a long, long time.

A/N:

Please read and review they honestly make my entire life. I just got a Stranger Things tattoo, so if that doesn't prove how obsessed I am with this show, I don't know what does.

FutureOlympian: Thanks for the review! So glad to hear someone is enjoying it as it is very... different.

SSJGamerYT: So am I! I'm excited to write it. There will probably be atleast five chapters of Hopper x El x Naomi life first, but that will be the first or second chapter right after !

5. Chapter 5: Patience

A/N: Greetings! I've planned it so I'll probably have one or two more chapters of stuff before the first episode of Season 2, so if there is anything you're dying to see, suggest now! See you down there.

A couple of month's had passed, and they had developed some sort of bizarre routine, the three of them. Monday through Friday, Hopper worked during the day. During those days, Naomi educated Eleven as much as she could. Something she couldn't teach well, was Math. Hopper left that till after dinner, and he took part in educating her Math and English.

'Word of the Day' was something El enjoyed. Expanding her vocabulary excited her, so Hopper and Naomi tried to at least use one new word a day for Eleven, although there were probably lots of new words they used that El didn't fully comprehend.

At night, when Hopper came home around 8:00pm, they would do some sort of activity. They would watch movies, do puzzles. Sometimes just El and Hopper did something, while Naomi did her own thing, or sometimes just Eleven and Naomi did. On very rare occasions was it just Naomi and Hopper doing something. Hopper only worked one night shift a week, but it was something the girls looked forward to. Saturday night's Eleven would pig out on candy, while Naomi watched, and they'd watch re-run's of Days of Our Lives, or do something rebellious. Hopper wasn't particularly fond of either of them using their powers, Naomi assumed it made him feel inferior. So on their special night, they'd test them out. Mostly Eleven's... but El liked to watch Naomi run around in a blur, timing her to see how fast she could do something. They'd enjoyed testing their strengths. The biggest Eleven had lifted was the couch, and that was only when her and Hopper had gotten into a fight about seeing Mike.

Hopper had taught Eleven morse code, and it was a useful way to talk to Hopper through his police signal in his truck when trying to stay incognito.

Night time was the worst, for all of them usually. As much as they

enjoyed their sleep, none of them could truly rest. Eleven called Mike through 'The Void' (That was the name they had decided on for the dark place where Eleven viewed others) She normally tried to do it after Naomi had fallen asleep, and sometimes Naomi faked falling asleep on purpose, so that the eager girl could see the boy she was so infatuated with sooner. Nine times out of ten, she cried. "Mike Mike Mike...." She'd whisper over and over. "Day 24. Day 38. Day 108. Day 205." That's where they were, now. It was day 206 for them, and Naomi was surprised she was still living there.

She had that awkward feeling, now. She felt as if she was overstaying her welcome, although neither of them showed signs of annoyance.

"Two cream, one sugar. Just how you like it," Naomi handed Hopper his mug of steaming coffee to him as he paraded out the door. He struggled to put his jacket on and slip his feet into his boots at the same time.

"Shit, I'm late already." Hopper tied his shoe laces, kneeling down. His key's were in his mouth. He stood erect, grabbing the coffee with a smile, and a quick thanks, then started to head out the door. "Oh! I almost forgot." He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a plastic pouch of blood, "Last one, I'll pick up some more later tonight after my shift. So I'll be home around 8:15 or so, alright?"

Eleven appeared behind her, just as Naomi caught the bag of blood between her hands. "8-1-5" time was something Hopper was still working on, with her.

"8:15, yes." He corrected. "Don't forget the pizza in the fridge, okay?" He directed at Naomi.

Naomi nodded, "Don't worry, pops," She reassured.

"Hop?" Eleven shambled closer to the Chief, placing her hands inside her overall pockets. "Will?"

"Yes," Hopper nodded, sighing. "I'm seeing Will today."

Naomi frowned. Her heart ached for Eleven who was so fervent to see her friends again. Every Monday Hopper saw Will at the Hawkins

Lab, running tests on him and discussing PTSD episodes.

"Soon?" She murmured in a voice that made Naomi's knees go weak. They were so desperate, so hopeful.

"Soon, Eleven. I promise," he repeated the same words each Monday, and each Monday, Eleven tried to be as hopeful as could be, plastering a fake smile in return.

Naomi sighed as Hopper shut the door, Eleven locking them behind him. She bit into the blood bag, slurping up its contents. It was something Eleven watched intently, before, but now she just ignored the odd behavior and ran quietly to the couch to sit in front of the television.

A lot had happened in the past few months.

There was some good-stuff, and some not-so-good stuff.

A memory that was significant in Naomi's head, was the discussion about hair with Eleven. Her's had grown out into a curly mop since then, a few inches long now, but before, when she was practically buzzcut, it was something that Eleven brought up a lot.

The first time she brought it up, was when Naomi taught Eleven how to braid.

"So you grab three strands..." Naomi grabbed three sections of hair, about one inch each, and showed Eleven. "There's a few ways to do it, but this is the easiest."

Eleven nodded adamantly.

"You kinda just... cross the sections over like this. One over the other." She demonstrated with her hair. "Like that," She braided about two inches down, then brushed it out.

"Can I try?" Eleven asked, sitting up on her kneeling position on the couch.

Naomi nodded, "Here I'll turn around so it's easier for you."

She felt Eleven run her hands through her hair, and tried to conceal her mutter's of displeasure as Eleven tore a few strands out, tugging and pulling on her brown locks.

After a good minute or two, though, she had some sort of messy twist that remotely resembled a braid.

It was a work in progress, like most things for Eleven. Naomi had tied the braid into her pony tail and wore it for the rest of the day, which had put a smile on Eleven's face.

"Sometimes, I feel like maybe Mike won't like me because I have no hair. Nancy has a lot of hair, and she is very pretty." Eleven said a few weeks later out of the blue.

She was in the middle of doing the dishes, and Naomi dropped the muffin pan they had used to make chocolate chip muffins from before.

"El..." She started.

Eleven touched her head, running her hands over her short hair. "Not pretty."

Naomi flipped around completely. She raised both brows. That was the biggest load of bullshit Naomi had ever heard in her entire life, and her face expressed that. "Because of your hair?"

El nodded.

Naomi was flabbergasted. Eleven was beautiful to her. She was a little bad-ass with powers. She had flawlessly olive skin, the cutest pixie cut. Her doe-brown eyes would melt anyone's heart. For Eleven to think otherwise was heart wrenching.

She pivoted, opening the junk drawer by the fridge and scavenging through it. She pushed supplies around, like coins, a tiny sewing kit, maps, tweezers, and tools; until she found the scissors.

Naomi paced over to the bathroom and planted her feet in front of the mirror. She could hear Eleven trail after her as she let her loose

braid that Eleven had earlier curtain around her face. She smoothed the brunette mane out with her fingers, then started cutting.

"No!" Eleven shrieked once she had made the first snip.

She made several noises of distress as Naomi started to cut inches upon inches of locks out.

"Not short short," Eleven ordered, pointing to her own hair, "Braiding," The single command was something Eleven did often, using one worded demands instead of a sentence to explain something.

Naomi obliged, though. She promised Eleven she wouldn't cut it too short, so she could at least still braid it, because it made her happy. The shoulder-length hair was much different than the few feet she had before though.

"Pretty?" She asked Eleven once she was done.

Eleven nodded, tears of happiness in her eyes. "Pretty." She returned, hugging Naomi tightly.

Another happy memory, for Naomi, was of one that didn't include her. She remembered sitting on the couch, divulging into a book as Hopper did his nightly ritual of putting Eleven to bed. Only this time, he took much longer to do.

She eavesdropped on the two, watching from the couch as Hopper pulled up a chair, disclosing a story to El. Anne of Green Gables.

"I-I would feel so sad... if I thought I was a disappointment to her." Hopper leaned over in the chair, elbows and knees with his hands pressed to his lips as he spoke. "Because she didn't live very long after that, you see. She died of a fever when I was just three months old. I do wish she'd live long enough to remember me calling her mother."

Eleven watched with soulful eyes as Hopper spoke.

"I think it would be so sweet to say, 'mother'" Hopper massaged his beard with one hand, the other on the bed holding Eleven's as he glanced at the passage in his lap. Both of their faces lit up orange

from the lamp light beside Eleven's bed, revealing looks of concern from both of them.

"Do I... Have a mother?" She spoke quietly, but still startled Hopper.

Naomi watched as Hopper looked up at her, the first time during that converse of words, and squeezed Eleven's hand. "Yeah, of course you have a mother." He licked his lips, one hand still playing with his messy beard. "You couldn't really be born without one."

There was a long pause.

"Where is she?"

Hopper exhaled through flared nostrils, "She... She's not around anymore." Hopper dropped his gaze again, looking at the floral quilt atop of Eleven.

"Gone?" her voice cracked.

"Yeah."

Eleven's lip quivered as tears started to form in her eyes. She pulled the blanket closer to her face.

"I'm sorry about that, kid."

Mostly the memories she had in this tiny bungalow with the human, and the telekinetic teen were good. Not all of them, though.

Hopper rarely, but sometimes decided to meal prep for the following day when he wouldn't be around. Naomi wasn't particularly great at cooking meals, considering she didn't eat food, so she left most of it up to Hopper as well, just as the same with the math.

He was making some sort of stew (which smelt atrocious) and was chopping up some veggies. When he had gotten to the carrots, he was halfway through the first one when he nicked his left thumb on the pad. He thought nothing of it, at first. He hissed, making an "ah," noise as he brought the thumb to his lips, sucking the wound.

Naomi was very attentive. She watched with wide eyes from the living room couch, her book face down on the table.

"See—this is why I don't cook." His eyes glanced up at her, "Naomi..." He paced out cautiously. "Your eyes."

Normally she would feel ashamed, embarrassed... Her eyes flared a bright red, small veins trailing underneath her eyes. She could feel the common sting of her gums as fangs formed.

She could smell the sickly sweet scent of warm, fresh, blood. Her animalistic sense took over and before she knew it, she had Hopper pinned against the wall by the fridge. His back was to her. One hand pinned his neck down, forcing his head into the wooden barrier. The other held his left arm out. The second she chomped down on his arm, he spun around hastily and forced her to the floor.

It was sort of a blur how he had gotten her into that position, but he knelt beside her, punning her down with half of his body, the other holding his bloody arm.

"Son of a—"

"Oh my God..." Her eyes had shifted back. Blood was smeared on her face like a kid who had just pigged out on chocolate cake. "Oh my God... Oh crap, oh crap." She was so thankful Eleven hadn't woken up. She didn't know what she would do if that girl was afraid of her. With her immense strength, she overpowered Hopper and rolled over.

He held his wrist, moving to stand vertically once he saw he face transition back. "Jesus Naomi, that bloody hurt."

She started to panic. "Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God."

"Naomi!" He hissed, "Calm down and grab me the first aid kit."

Despite Hop not liking it, she used her powers to flutter around the kitchen. She grabbed the first aid kit, a damp cloth, some paper towel to clean up the blood from the floor.

"I'm so sorry, Hop! Jesus, I'm so so sorry!"

"Just... just shut up. It's fine. It's not a big deal,"

She lifted both shaky hands to her face, feeling helpless while she watched Hopper bandage his wrist up.

"I-I..."

"Naomi," He groaned, his voice sounding more annoyed than anything. "Why do you look like you just killed someone? It's not a big deal. It's fine."

"I could've!" She shrieked.

"But you didn't," He grumbled. "Okay? It's fine." He let out a hearty laugh, "Okay? Don't sweat it. Something like this was bound to happen. I've just been busy—haven't had a time to make a trip to the hospital but I'll make a trip tomorrow. Alright?"

She nodded, but she was stunned. This was in no means his fault. At all. She just didn't know what to say. The guilt started to crush her. Images of parties flashed across her mind, feeding on reckless teenagers and homeless adolescents.

"Alright?" he repeated, shooting her a frumpy smile as he taped the bandage down.

"Alright," She nodded again.

Just as he was about to return to his cooking, she stopped him. HE impeded his walk, and spun back around.

With a trembling hand, she placed her fingers around the newly bandaged wound. She shut her eyes and waited a few seconds.

"What are you—" His sentence impeded and she re-opened her eyes.

She watched the black veins snake up her arms, taking away the pain that Hop was experiencing from her causing. Her hand stopped trembling and she felt calm. Not quite like she had redeemed herself, but the situation was a little bit better now at least.

The pain was much externalized. It stung a bit, and she thought to

herself 'that's how other's felt when I dug my teeth into their flesh'. When the last of the pain was gone, he smiled.

"Thanks," Was all he said.

She shot him a weak smile, returning to her spot on the couch.

It was oddly... not uncomfortable. She hadn't really expected the reaction that played out. She picked up her book again, tossing her head back to Jim. There he was, giving her a smile as he returned to chopping vegetables.

They fought like crazy, too. It was almost always over Eleven. Naomi was the one that slept beside her each night, tossing and turning on the squeaky air mattress. She was the one that listened to her each night, watched clandestinely as Eleven flicked the lamp light on after she thought they were all asleep. She spied as she flipped through radio channels until she found an unused static that filled the room with white noise.

She wrapped a blindfold around her eyes. "Mike.... Mike I'm here." She muttered. She never really talked to him, though. She never let him know that she was there. Seconds later, blood dripped from the one nostril, and she would cry.

There was one night, though, where she didn't fake sleep after she had removed the blindfold.

Instead, she climbed up onto the bed and hugged the crying girl with the dripping nose. She didn't question her consciousness; instead, she let Naomi hold her. Her face scrunched up, and she just cried.

"I miss him...." She had wept, "I miss Mike and Dustin and Will."

"I know," She didn't, but she pretended to. "Soon," She found herself promising the same to her as Hopper had repeatedly.

When she woke up the next day, she had requested that Hopper and her step out for a second before he left for work.

"You can't keep keeping her from them..." She argued after a minute

or two of bantering previously. "It's upsetting her."

"It's not safe!" He hissed back. "Not yet. I feel like... like I'm making progress with these people. Doc Owens, the rest of the lab."

"That's what you said last week, Hop!" She said, throwing her arms up, "And the week before that, and the week before that."

His brows furrowed, "I'm not keeping you here, Naomi. You're free to leave whenever you like. This isn't a prison."

She shook her head. "That's not what I'm trying to get at, and you know it."

He stomped off into the dewy spring morning, "I'm late for work. I have to go Naomi." He called back to her, "I'll Morse code you what time I'll be back tonight. Just tell her... tell her to be a little more patient."

That afternoon, Eleven's word of the day was patient.

"Able to accept or tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious." She read to her from the Dictionary.

Eleven didn't like that word.

"I saw them today..." Hopper started one night, after putting Eleven to bed.

"Who?" She muttered back causally from the couch, her usual spot on the very right side resting against the arm.

"The Winchesters."

Naomi froze. If she was human, her heartbeat would sure be audible by now. She didn't say anything for a long moment, and Hopper wouldn't look at her. "H-How... How did you know it was them? It's been months..." Hopper could see her start to panic. She speedily moved to the center of the room, starting to pace. "I thought they were gone... I thought they had left town."

"They came in looking for you," He paused, "And someone named Jasper. He showed me photos. They were dressed in FBI. I mean, I only really knew it was them from the car; the Impala." He recessed again, "But it's fine, I made sure my deputy disregarded the paper's, told Flo, my secretary, to let me know if they came back, or heard any calls about him."

He had lost her by that point. She had started to walk in circles. Her hands were pressed tightly to her chest, and she twined and untwined them. He could practically feel the anxiety radiating from her.

"Hey! Hey." Hopper grabbed her shoulders, spinning her to face him. They locked eyes. "They won't find you here, alright?"

Her bottom lip started to quiver. "I can't stay here forever, Hop."

"Yes you can." He hissed back. "You can stay here past my death day, if you want to."

She started to grow weak in his arms, and Jim could feel her tremble, watched her knees shake. She was afraid. She was never afraid... "I-I can't..."

"Naomi." He said her name slowly, leisurely. Making sure she heard it. "Listen to me; they will not find you. I would put my ass on the line over and over again to protect you if I have to. Just as I would do the same for that girl in there," he stabbed his pointer finger at Eleven's ajar door.

"Hopper," She started to whimper, her lips pressing together into a fine line, blanching white they were so firm. "I-I don't mean to sound... ungrateful. B-But," She stuttered, her eyes avoiding contact, "I'm not worth it."

Hopper knew what she was referring to.... Her past. It was something they had really discussed, just assumed it was an untouchable subject. Maybe it was presumptuous of him, but he had guessed that she had killed before. He didn't like to think about it, but he knew she had.

"I don't give two shits about your history, okay? I don't care." He

gripped her shoulders tighter, shaking her a little to make sure she would pay attention and look at him. "You're staying here. You're staying safe."

The budding sob he could see growing in her chest finally escaped, and all he could do was hug her. He gripped her tight, encompassing his arms around her, and they stayed like that for a while. He rested his chin on her hair, and she sobbed into his chest.

He didn't like seeing her so vulnerable, but it was refreshing. It was nice to see that she wasn't holding up that front that she so often liked to block people from. In conjunction with being refreshing, it was heartbreaking for him to watch.

Having a daughter previously caused him to sort of resurface his paternal authority. It broke his damn heart to think about even replacing Sarah, but it took him these past few months to release he wasn't replacing Sarah, he was making her proud. He was using these feeling he had, as a dad previously, and putting them to good use, to two orphan's who so badly needed one another.

They both stood there frozen in the middle of the room. They could hear the wind rushing outside, the friction of the air between objects crafting whooshing noises faintly. The only other noise, beside the familiar buzz of the refrigerator, was her light blubber's.

Eleven, appearing not to be asleep, removed herself from her room and shuffled in her socks across the wooden floor. Without saying a word, she hugged the two.

And for a moment there, Hopper swore he felt the world stop.

A/N: Welcome new followers! Thank's for reading. Drop a review and make my day! To repeat from early, only a few more chapters before Season 2 episode 1 will line up. I have a few more things planned, but if there's anything you'd like to see drop a review!

6. Chapter 6: Fireworks

A/N: Greetings! Another chapter, another time jump. One or two more before it lines up with the next season! Tell me what you wanna see? Also, I promise Jasper will make an appearance sometime in this story again, so will the Winchester's. Just want to start focusing on the stranger things story line a little bit more.

Disclaimer: I do not own Stranger things or anything besides my OC and some ideas.

"Hop will be mad,"

"So don't tell him," Naomi replied, holding Eleven's hand as she trailed her through the dark forest. It was warm outside, being the beginning of July.

Naomi held a small box with one arm, held closely to her right hip. She tugged at Eleven's plaid shirt with the other hand, towing her through bushes and trees until she found the open field she was looking for.

"The bad men?" She asked as they neared the opening.

"Not going to find you out here. I'll kick their ass if they do anyways."

She was still apprehensive, clearly, but as soon as Eleven saw why Naomi had brought her out in the middle of the forest, in the dead of night during one of Hopper's only night shifts, she'd realize why.

"Okay," She released Eleven's hand and moved towards of the middle of the field, dropping the box down against the dry grass. "Come on," She waved Eleven over.

Eleven took her time to pace over, scanning the forest's surroundings. She never went outside... Not since Hopper had found her.

Naomi went out very rarely, but Hopper didn't stop her; just warned her not to put any of them in danger. It always made Eleven sad,

though, so she rarely left the small cabin in the woods.

"What are we doing?" She asked, brushing a few loose curls out of her eyes. Her hair was a brunette mop of curls atop her head, now. No shape to it. It was growing, though, and Naomi could tell it made Eleven happy.

"You'll see," She answered with a cheeky smirk. She kneeled to the box and grabbed the innocuous red paper cone from the box. "Do you know what day it is, El?"

"July four." She responded. Naomi didn't correct her 'four' with 'fourth'. She just nodded, grabbing a zippo from her jean pocket.

"It's the states commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th 1776." Eleven nodded, shoving her hands into her overall pockets. Her and Naomi had gone over that in their previous history lesson. "People do fun thing's to celebrate the fourth of July, so I figured we could too."

"That's why you woke me up so late?" She questioned.

"It's worth it, I promise." She assured Eleven. She knew how Eleven got if she didn't get enough sleep. "Okay," She flicked her zippo lid open, making sure she had adequate lighter fluid. "Now stand back a bit," She waved her hands at Eleven.

Eleven obliged, walking backwards a few feet until Naomi told her it was safe. "Maybe cover your ears!" She yelled at her, knowing how easily El got frightened. Eleven fulfilled the command, bringing her sweater sleeves to her ears, covering them.

Naomi smiled to herself, looking back down at the firework in her hand. She had four of them, enough to keep them entertained for five minutes or so. The fuse was pretty short, but with Naomi's quick speed she could zip over to El in a jiffy. She lit the end of the firework, hearing the satisfying sizzle of the wick, and then bolted to Eleven.

She kneeled beside Eleven, who was much taller then her when standing, and leaned her head against Eleven's hip. She gave Eleven a

bright smile, teeth and all, and then waited.

Seconds later, it happened.

It started with an ostentatious orange shooting up in the sky. Eleven's eyes widened at that, wider than Naomi had ever seen them. It started to flutter downwards once reaching its peak height, and then, boom. Threads of purple orange and yellow streamed outwards; wavy bands of color lit up the atmosphere for a good few seconds, and the noise came after, like gunfire. It startled Eleven, Naomi feeling her knee tremble, but she was too in awe to do anything.

"What..." She was left speechless, hands still over ears, eyes still wide as saucers.

Naomi did nothing but let out a proud laugh.

She zoomed back over the box, and set up the next two fireworks. She lit the smaller looking one first, and then the bigger one. She whizzed back over to Eleven, standing beside her this time, and waited again.

The first detonation went off with a deafening crackle, followed by a whistling noise. She was too focused on El's face; waiting for her reaction, that she didn't see the beautiful display beside her. There was another thunderous pop, and she watched Eleven's face light up all sorts of colors. Blue first, then purple, followed by yellow, green, then orange.

Her smile was priceless, and she would never forget her face that night. She smiled, with teeth; which was big for Eleven. Her smile could've lit up the darkest dwelling in the forest at the dead of night. It was one you saw, and you couldn't help but smile as well. There was something about the way she grinned; the way the butterflies seemed to escape from the pit of her stomach and the way the sun had somehow toppled down from the sky and made a home right there in her heart. That smile was the kind that made you feel happy to be alive and just that little bit more human.

She felt euphoric.

"Want to light the next one?" She asked, after Eleven turned back to her a minute or two after the last one discharged.

She rushed a nod.

They both walked over to the box again, removing the last one from it. They stood it upright with a wire, and pulled the tassel out towards them.

"Here," She handed Eleven the zippo, "Just be careful. When I say run, you run. Got it?"

"Yes." She flopped open the silver zippo, scooting closer to the fuse. She moved the lit flame closer to the wick, igniting it. It sizzled, smoking up and making a hissing noise.

"Okay, run!" She grabbed Eleven's arm, and they darted in the other direction.

They both let out hearty laughs as the firework blew up into the air, glimmering sparks exploding from the epicenter. Another loud crackle, followed by a pop and another whistling noise.

Naomi was astonished to hear Eleven let out a small 'whoop' her hands cheering in the air. She let out a laugh, watching the girl cheer as the ribbons of yellow kangaroo-kicked higher in the air. Naomi clapped, yelling with Eleven. "Wahoo!" They could feel the heat from the flamboyant stripes of color.

The last of the rainbow fizzled out, and she turned to grinning Eleven, smiling from ear to ear. She internally cursed herself for not buying more. She didn't want to draw too much attention to the field, though, even though it wasn't that close to the cabin.

"What... was that!" She was speechless, her fists were clenched, and her smile was still broadcasting.

"Fireworks," She rubbed her mop of messy curls, and stood facing the wide open night sky. The dotting of stars across the night sky was like freckles dusted on a teenager.

They were both quiet, chests heaving and smiles beaming still. They

watched the night sky for what seemed like forever. At one point, they even saw a shooting star. "Make a wish," Naomi bumped Eleven. Naomi already knew what the girl had wished for, long after she shut her eyes. It had to do with a particularly dark haired teenage boy that Eleven had showed her in 'the Void'. Naomi had only been there once. She didn't like that place... it gave her the creeps. It was one of the first times she had brought someone with her. It was dark there, everything pitch black; even the floor—although it seemed like you were treading in water. Everything echoed there too.

"Come on, kiddo," She turned Eleven around to the way they came, "Let's go."

She gave her an exasperated smile, and they trudged back through the forest. They took their time, as I was only just midnight and Hopper wouldn't be back till 6:00am. The wildlife made its nightly ritual noises; cricket's chirping, night birds piping, trees and bushes rustling.

They were both pretty quiet, still reveling in the adrenaline from the firework display. It only took a five minute walk back to the cabin.

They made their last few steps through the foliage, when Naomi heard another heartbeat.

"Shit..." She hissed, pushing through a few bushes to the trail leading to the cottage.

"Yeah" Hopper stood there, still clad in his work uniform, with his hands on his hips. "Shit's right." The chemosignals he came off were... mixed. Rage. Anger.... But most of all; fear.

Eleven shuffled behind Naomi.

"Bed" Was all he said.

Eleven moved around Naomi to trot to the cottage. She didn't look Hopper in the eye as she darted around him.

She slammed the door shut behind her, but not bothering to lock it.

"Are you kidding me?" He started, his voice much louder than her. He

took a few threatening steps towards her. "Fireworks." He added in disbelief, "You want to hold up a sign in the middle of town that says 'here I am!' too? Huh?" He pushed, standing a few inches from her now.

Naomi pushed passed him, rolling her eyes as she smacked shoulders with him.

"Hey!" He growled after she took the first step on the stairs. "Don't walk away from me when I'm talking to you."

She pivoted, "Don't speak to me like you speak to her," She hitchhiked a thumb backwards. "I'm not some replacement for the whole in your heart, Hop." She slapped a hand over her mouth. She didn't mean to say that... but she was angry too. How could he be mad? It was the first time Eleven had left the house. Sure, it was stupid... but she would never regret giving that girl the time of her life. "Ugh— I didn't mean—"

"Don't." He snarled. "Stop treating me like you treat the world. Like you hate and despise everything."

She didn't know what to say. She just gave him an incredulous, livid stare; her arms folded tightly over her chest. "Stop treating her like the lab did, Hop! Stop keeping her cooped up 24/7 in that damn cabin."

"No one's making you stay, Naomi!" He yelled back, his hand gesticulating to the door.

"You can't treat her like that, Hop!" She slapped her hands against her thighs, throwing Hopper a poignant look. "It's not fair. What's the difference between here and the Lab, then, huh?"

Hopper stabbed a finger at her. "You can't parent her either! You're not her mom... or her sister, Naomi. I make the calls around here. I told you you could stay. I feed, I take care, I help, and I protect you guys. Both of you. Just because we spend a few month's together doesn't mean you're her older sister and can go around making all these decisions without my consent! Not when it comes to her. You're not even human..." The last word he spits through gritted teeth, and

Naomi watches as his heart races, the pulse spiking up quickly in anger. She sees his jaw clench, his teeth brux one another, and his eyes squint into hard lines. "You kill people. You can't just pretend you're human and be all happy and shit. The world doesn't work like that."

"You're right," She counters, tears of anger in her eyes. "I do kill people. I have killed people. I've spilled more blood than the both of you combined. I've watched the last ounce of life drain from people's eyes more times than I can count!" She's screaming now, and she didn't care if Eleven could hear her. She would probably be gone after this. "You wanna know the worst part?" She chuckles slightly, "I actually liked it, too." She wasn't ready for a pity party, nor was she ready for Hopper to be scared of her, but he needed to know. They had both avoided the topic of death for so long. "You wanna know how I died, Hopper? Do you?"

He said nothing. He just watched her with apprehensive his eyes, his mouth contorting into... disgust. Fear. Anger. Sadness. Pity....

She sits down, knowing this will be a long one for him.

"My dad left when I was 6, and my mom died when I was 20. After she died my brother, my twin brother Theodore, he became obsessed with immortality. He didn't want to see death strike again to me or him. He was... infatuated with finding a vampire. And he did, he found one. Jasper. He ruined his life..." She hated crying. It showed vulnerability. She swiped away at them angrily. "The change doesn't always affect everyone like it did him. He wasn't even the same person... I mean, at least I felt guilt when I killed, you know?"

Again, Hopper remained quiet. She couldn't read his facial expression.

"He confronted me about it and told me he wanted us to live together. He wanted us both to travel... to be brother and sister forever. A century old vampire had turned him and he offered to turn me to. I got there, and I just watched them all. All twenty or so of them, around the fire, like some sadistic cult." She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear "I've always been more of a lone wolf myself..."

Hopper's face starts to soften.

"I went there for him. I didn't want to be turned.... I was just supposed to meet his coven. He kept telling me, 'It's okay, shh... Cross Twins: Invincible, remember?'" She mimicked in his voice. Her mind went back to that horrid night, and her eyes spaced out. "Don't you wanna be like me?" "It won't hurt... It'll be easy I promise'." She swallowed hard. "T-The coven leader... Jasper... He hated me—or maybe he liked me a little too much. I couldn't tell. They trapped me, force fed me his blood and then I just... I didn't know what to do," She sucked on her bottom lip, before letting it jut out with a 'pop'. "I just ran..." More tears, but she didn't care now.

Hopper had a look of pity on his face now, and she wanted to smack it off of him. She didn't need his pity. She needed Eleven. She needed that girl, she needed to keep her safe.

"It was sort of sick—" She spat the word out, saliva spraying from her mouth, "twisted game to him. 'You've got five minutes to run, little Red. Or the big bad wolf's gonna get ya'. I'm running in the forest... All I can hear is his damn laughter. He's circling me, playing with me. I can hear his feet every now and again... It's too dark, and the storm starts to pick up so I trip. When I look up, he's there. Right in front of me." She sniffles, "He likes to play, Jasper. He likes a good hunt. Someone that makes it hard for him. I guess I wasn't doing that for him... He started off with my left leg. He snap's like a twig just by stepping on it. He does the same to my right leg.... And then he moves to my arms. He breaks those single handedly. Then I'm just lying there like a fucking corpse in the middle of the forest. I can barely see anything from the rain, but he flips me over. He started to kiss... me." She didn't go into detail, but knew that Hopper understood. "All I could do was scream. Until he slit's my throat with his pocket knife. It's not enough to kill me, but it's enough to feel the pain pulsate throughout me, spreading like some sort of wild fire." She shivers, thinking back to that night. "You wanna know what he did next, Hop? Do you want to?"

He doesn't speak for a moment... When he opens his lips; tears well in his eyes ever so slightly. "*What.*"

"He grabs these fucking chains out of nowhere. He straps my broken

legs to them... and then he drops me in the lake to drown. I fucking drowned to death, Hopper. 'It'll be quick, and painless' he promised Theo, but no. I never told my brother what he did. You know why? Because at that point, I had already lost my brother. He was too far gone. He would believe Jasper over I. He had put so much trust into this man." She started to play with her hair, swirling her finger around to try to distract herself and calm her down.

She's heaving breaths now... Not from the crying; from the anger. She wanted that man dead.

"You know when you're drowning; you don't actually inhale until right before you black out. It's called voluntary apnea. It's like no matter how much you're freaking out, the instinct to not let any water in is so strong that you won't open your mouth until you feel like your head's exploding. But then when you finally do let it in, that's when it stops hurting. It's not scary anymore. It's - it's actually kind of peaceful." She paused, her head turning and her eyes locking with Hopper's. "Until you wake up."

Hopper swallows, hard.

"I spent the next year trying to control myself. I tried to act like them... I tried to fit in! The hunters came, though. They shot everyone dead. The guy I was seeing, too, as well as my coven embers, and my brother included..."

"I'm sorry—" he starts.

"Except Jasper" She shakes her head, a sob escaping her chest. She held her stomach with one arm, hoping that would stop them from suppressing. "That stupid bastard got out... And I know he's been tracking me to. Until I came here. I feel safe here. Eleven finding me that day in the forest was the best fucking thing to happen to me." The anger comes back. "So help me God if I have to turn that chick's life around and be her big sister I fuckin' will and you can't stop me. You've done more for and I then I could ever thank you for, Hopper, truly. You've given me some—weird sorta fucked up family. I care about both of you. If you want to kick me out, tell me to beat it and watch me kick the can with the hunters, or Jasper, I won't detest. I will damn well be there for that girl as much as I can though. I. Am.

Not. Running. Not anymore."

"I, uh— I had a kid. Sarah, was her name." She was surprised to see him speak—to not yell at her. "I lost her though... Cancer took her away from us three years ago, it's why I moved back here from New York. My marriage crumbled... I lost everything. I guess that's why I'm so hard on her. I guess I'm just worried that I'll lose her too. I'm not good at this whole parenting thing."

Naomi's jaw clenched, and the rest of the pooling tears overflow and fall down the sides of her cheeks. She wiped them with her sweater sleeve.

"I just don't trust them, you know? I don't trust anyone. I'm afraid—truth be told." Tears threatened to pool over his eyelids, the brim flooding, and the liquid reflecting from the porch lights. "The second I tell the kid, he tells his friends. The second his friend's find out, Will does. Will say's something during his doctor visits... and it's over. She's done."

Naomi unfolded her arms, shifting her weight from one leg to the other as she listened.

"I just need time." He begged of her, "I need more time. I'm trying to get through to these people.... I know I can. I just need more time." His face softened, and his hands folded into each other as he looked at her with sorrow, pleading eyes. He could see the hurt, the anguish, the fear. He could see the broken man's soul behind the brown irises. The one who had lost his daughter, the one who wore his deceased daughter's (whom he had outlive) hair tie around his wrist still. The one who's sole purpose was to take care of the girl he had unknowingly adopted in the cabin. She could see it all. "But I need you on my side," his voice cracked.

He was broken.

"Please,"

This man had given up so much for the both of them. He had given her a place to stay, to sleep. He had given her food, and not argued for a millisecond about it. He had given her appreciation and a

family. He had given her a purpose—even when she felt so lost. On the other hand, she could see how lost Eleven was. She was being educated, yes, and she was in a much safer environment than the lab—even though she had never seen her previous quarters. Eleven just wanted her friends, though. She wanted Mike. She trusted the man, though. She had to. What other choice did she have?

She nodded.

A/N: Again, let me know what you'd like to see in these upcoming chapters. Thank you for reading! Please drop a review :) They push me to write.

P.S Did anyone catch that teen wolf line? I thought I'd use it as it seemed fitting and considering I love Stiles. Let me know if you catch it!

7. Chapter 7: The Void

Enjoy this short chapter. Thought I'd include Mike a little bit before we are fully introduced to him later on in the story from Naomi's p.o.v.

Disclaimer: I do not own Stranger Things or Netflix or any of the characters, only my OC. Nor do I own anything related to Supernatural in this story.

"Um, hey El. It's Mike. Just like it has been for the first 347 days..." He let out a forced laugh. "Ha... Yeah. Well today is day 348, technically. It's late. 1:04am to be exact. We just finished playing D&D. Everyone else is asleep. We're having a sleepover. Do you know what that is?" He paused, "I'm sure you do. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Will all came over and are sleeping here instead of at their own house and we pig out on candy and listen to the radio and play D&D all night and stuff. We try to stay up all night, but Dustin always ends up falling asleep first." He snorted, genuinely this time. "The campaign is going well. They've finally made it into the town I was telling you about. They're snowed in at the Inn they're staying at, and there is a killer on the loose in the manor. Dustin thinks it's the Innkeeper because he's a shape shifter, but since he's a bard he blames everyone." He lets out a long sigh. "They talk about you lot's, still, like you'll come back. They say how good of a mage you'd make. I could teach you dungeons and dragons! It would be sofun," He briefly let go of the button on the walkie talkie, and static is heard.

He crosses his legs over one another, pulling a checkered blanket over his lap as he replaces the intercom between his ear and shoulder, static crackling again. "We've been starting to plan our costumes for Halloween already. We're going as the Ghostbusters, cool right?" For a moment, his face lights up at the thought of his friends. "You probably don't know who they are... but they're this cool group of four who take calls from their city and go around hunting ghosts and whatnot. It's from a movie. You would like it, I think. I mean, you liked the sound of Star Wars when I explained it to you, and I think we have similar taste." He bit his lip, "At least I hope so. I don't know. But anyways, I'm going as Venkmann, he's the coolest of the group. Probably the smartest, too—" He releases the button, quieting

as he hears Lucas stir in his slip, a light snore escaping his lips.

When the coast is clear again, he continues... his voice quieter this time, "Sorry. Anyways... Yeah I'm excited. I wish you were here. You could be the ghost, or something! Just put a sheet over your head, and cut out holes for your eyes, it'd be perfect. That's what I was in the fourth grade," He smiled to himself. He ran a hand through his dark locks. He started to pick at a small thread in his Star Wars pajama pants, pulling at the hem. He was sitting on a pile of old clothes underneath a wooden table, a table cloth draped over it, and connecting to a chair. Like a small fort.

"I hope you're okay..." a more poignant expression fills his freckled face. "I miss you, so much. We all do. I wish you'd come home... I wish you'd come back." He tries to hide the crack in his voice by curling his lips over his teeth, tightening his face. "I need you, Eleven... I just feel like everything's crumbling. Will is having more of his episodes, Dustin and Lucas avoid the situation like the plague, and we spend every other freaking day in my basement or the arcade. I don't know what to do without you here. I keep thinking I'm seeing you... but I'm not. The first night after The Demogorgon took you, I swore I saw you. I ran outside, but I couldn't find you. After all the government men left after questioning I camped outside till Dawn, but I never saw you, or what I thought was you, come back." He hissed in a breath, gathering himself.

"I hope... wherever you are, there's an abundance of Eggo waffles." He laughed a little, "Sorry. You probably don't know what that means either. It's like, a lot of something." He gnawed at the chapped skin on his pink lips. "In case you're out there, whether it's the Upside Down, or somewhere else; It's Day 348 Eleven— and I miss you." He released the button, wiping the tiniest amount of salty liquid starting to leak from his left eye. "I'll check in again tomorrow. Over."

Naomi stirred from her quiet slumber, fisting her eyes. She was atop Eleven's bed, having fallen asleep there from the quiet storm that had ensued earlier. El didn't like the thunder, or the lightning. Every time she saw the flash, or heard the booming noise, She'd curl into Hopper's side before she went to bed.

When Naomi had announced her departure to sleep, Eleven followed. She had requested that Naomi come up there, which was something she often did after a bad dream or visiting Mike.

"Just count the number of seconds that pass between a flash of lightning and the crack of thunder that follows it, and then divide that number by five." Naomi explained to her. That number will tell you how many miles away you are from where the lightning just struck." Naomi did all the dividing, as Eleven was still working on just multiplying at the moment. It made her feel better, knowing that it was moving farther away, but Naomi stayed up there with Eleven in the tiny bed, curled up beside her to keep her comforted.

She looked at Eleven, a guilty look upon her face. Tears in her eyes, only evident from the moonlight glistening on her eyes, and a sad frown. Naomi's eyes darted from the television pulled into their room in front of them, to a glooming Eleven, a black blindfold pushed up on her head, making her brown curls splay dramatically atop her head.

"I'm sorry," She muttered, her eyes glancing from their holding hands, to the television. "I accidentally brought you with me."

It had happened once before, but Mike hadn't said that much, that time. This time, he had spilled out a whole monologue to her. He was hurting, as was she. That time, she was more concerned with how dark 'The Void' was, and how you could only see him, nothing else around him. When they stepped, it was like water beneath them. Everything echoed.. and when they left, Mike faded into the inky blackness like smoke.

"It's okay," She managed to sputter out sleepily, still fisting her eye as she sat up.

Naomi glanced to the movement she saw in the corner of the room, where she saw Hopper creak the door open ever so slightly, a green eye peering in on the two.

"H-He needs me..." She exposed dolefully, her voice cracking as her lip quivered. A whimpering noise escaped her chest. Naomi could she was trying to hold it together. She wrapped her arms around the fragile lady and pulled her into her chest. Hopper watched closely as the two girls embraced, Eleven sobbing into Naomi's chest.

Naomi held her for what seemed like forever. She squeezed her tight

every so often, when Eleven started to weep again, and she rested her chin on top of her head. She shut her eyes, the only noise in the room the sound of her wailing and a sniffing noise.

She heard Hopper sigh, shutting the door quietly as he shuffled back to his own bad.

Eventually, Naomi managed to pull her back down to the bed. It didn't stop her wracking sob's though. Her breathing grew labored, and she fisted her shirt as her leg's moved wildly in the sheets.

She didn't know what to do at this point.

348 days. 348 days this boy had been calling out to her, every night. And every night, Eleven listened. It was getting harder and harder for Hopper to keep the two apart, and Hopper was starting to see that. She was so stuck on keeping her safe, and wanting what was best for her as well. She couldn't see Mike if she was locked up again though, could she?

Eventually, they both dozed back off to sleep, the two of them cuddled together between the thin sheets of the single bed. Light rain started to tap against the window, peacefully allowing them to slip into oblivion.

The last thought Naomi had before fading into unconsciousness, was that 348 day's was much too long to keep Michael Wheeler and Eleven Hopper apart.

A/N: Thanks for reading!

Lady Jensen: Interesting! Maybe I'd do that in a dream sequence

S: Thanks for your feedback :) Love to hear that people are enjoying this! It truly pushes me to continue writing.

: Thank you so much! Thanks for reviewing, it help's me come out with quicker chapters and write more when I get reviews.

8. Chapter 8: All Hallows' Eve

A/N: I had this chapter planned in my mind for so long...

I do not own Stranger Things, Supernatural, or Netflix. Just my OC and some cool ideas, I guess.

"Hey, Zoltan, can you pass me some more bread from the freezer?"

Naomi hopped off the kitchen counter, shuffling towards the fridge in her nightgown and off-white fluffy slippers Hopper had got her for her birthday last week. She opened the freezer and removed another loaf of bread, dropping it beside the stove.

Naomi sucked in a waft of the French toast he was currently cooking through her nose. "Smell's terrible," She referred to the unnatural scent that hindered over the human food. Had she been human, she'd love the sickly sweet smell of the toast, eggs, and cinnamon sugar in the pan.

"Says you," he snorted, flipping a piece over in the pan.

It landed with a 'splat' and a satisfying sizzle after.

"Any news about the Winchesters?" Naomi planted her butt back on the same spot on the counter beside him.

He didn't look at her as he spoke. "Flo said she saw them station a 'Lost Girl' poster on the outside bulletin board. I got my deputy to tear it down, though. No doubt it would've been your face on it."

"They didn't question taking it down?" Naomi crossed her arms over her chest.

He smiled smugly to himself as he flipped two pieces of French toast onto a plate. "No one questions my authority."

She exhaled a quick laugh through her nostrils. "That's kinda scary," She watched as a disfigured white form appear behind Hopper, who was turning the stove off with a quick flick of his wrist. Two eye

holes were cut where eyes should be on a white sheet, atop Eleven's rigid body.

Hopper hinged around, and Naomi heard his heart skip a full beat.

"Oh!" He started out loud, "*Jesus...*" he said quieter after regaining himself.

"Ghost" She delivered in a very illustrative tone

Naomi smirked, pulling a leg up on the counter to cross over her adjacent thigh.

"Yeah, I see that." He frowned, moving past her to drop her plate on the dining table.

"Halloween," She conveyed explanatorily.

"Sure is..." He held on to the last word, "But now it's breakfast. Okay?" He grabbed the cup of coffee Naomi had made him from beside her and progressed for the table again.

"They wouldn't see me." She declaimed to Hopper, white sheet still covering her body. She could only see the tiny movements she made with her body to keep her eye holes on Hopper.

"Who wouldn't see you?" He moved around her again, an annoyed look on his face as he dropped the cup of coffee and two sets of cutlery on the table.

Naomi bit her lip; knowing that another repartee would result from Eleven's constant covet to want to go outside, to see Mike and her friends again—to do something outside this hut.

"What are you talking about," he said it rushed, in one breath.

"Trick— Or – Treat" She said the words very broken up, and Naomi could see her plaid shirt underneath the blanket, her hands folded together as she patiently waited for an answer, optimistic that he would conform this time.

He exhaled audibly, looking from her, to his cup of coffee, to Naomi,

and back to her. He sighed. "You wanna go trick-or-treating?"

She gave an excited nod, her clasped hands releasing. Naomi didn't need to see her face to know how hopeful it must have looked. Maybe the puppy dog eyes would've work. She hopped off the counter and moved towards the two of them.

Hopper shook his head in disbelief, standing up to grab something else from the kitchen. "You know the rules," he disclosed.

"Yes! But—" She blocked Hopper from leaving his chair, but he placed his hands gently on her shoulders, one on each side, and started to drive her backwards towards her seat.

"Yeah so you know the answer," He quibbled in return.

"No, I— but they wouldn't see me," She tried to resist.

"No. Hey." He argued back, "I don't care."

"They wouldn't see me!"

"I don't care," He vocalized slower. He kneeled down to her height, hands still on her shoulders. "All right? You go out, ghost or not, It's a risk. We don't take risks," He removed his hands, Patronizing brows brow's rising, "All right? They're stupid. Aaand...?" he waited for her to carry on.

Naomi could sense her body glowering, and gently nudged the side of her foot with the toes of her fuzzy slippers, making it seem like she was just waiting to get by to the couch. Touch reassured Eleven, even if it was just subtle.

"We're not stupid!" She supported back through gritted teeth.

Hopper stood erect. "Exactly" He heaved another sigh, "Now you take that off, sit down; and eat." He irately demanded, sitting back in his chair. "Your foods getting cold"

In a heated motion, Eleven flipped the sheet over her head.

She stood there, bottom lip scarcely pouting, and she looked at

Naomi, who was on the couch divulging into another Stephen King book. She crossed her legs, shooting Eleven a feeble glimpse as she shrugged her shoulders and removed the bookmark from Cujo.

"Oh no," Hopper protested, putting his mug down after taking his first sip, "Don't go looking at her for answers. I call the shot's round here. If she was, you'd be found by the bad men a long time ago, El."

El ill-temperedly sat in her chair, arms crossed as she glowered at her food.

Hopper poured her syrup for her, knowing all too well that if he let her do it herself she would've drunken the whole damn bottle.

Eleven's scowling eyes shifted to melancholy as her irises drifted to the floor. She massaged the sides of her arms, bringing a foot up onto the dining chair.

Hopper sighed. He always did this, gave in after being too harsh. He had a heart, a big one at that, but Naomi knew he would never admit it. He'd give the girl everything if he could. He cared for her on such a raw echelon, and it was very obvious as a foreigner. Disciplining her wasn't something he enjoyed, although he was a little too good at it at times from his line of work.

He shut his eyes, sighing as he rested his forehead on the palm of his right hand. "All right, look...How about—" he paused to swallow, and his eyes opened as he scratched his forehead. "I get off early tonight, and I buy us all a bunch of candy, and we can sit around; get fat, and watch a scary movie. Dracula's your favorite, right?"

She nodded, glancing at Naomi.

Naomi smirked, looking up from her book.

"Okay then, we'll do that. How's that for compromise?"

She leaned in, a look of bewilderment washing over her. "C-Compromise?" She stuttered, testing out the unknown word.

He grabbed one side of the table, locking eyes with Eleven. "C-O-M-Promise." He spelled out, "Compromise."

Eleven, still slightly grumpy, shifted in her chair to look at Naomi instead of Hopper.

"It's like an agreement," Naomi explicated, flipping the page in her book, "You can't both win so you're both settling to agree on something."

"How about that's your word of the day? Yeah?" he pushed, trying to allow himself into Eleven's point of view.

She sighed through her nostrils. Conciliation and cooperation was not her strong point, but she did it anyways.

"It's something that's kind of in between. Like halfway happy." He added, a much softer tenor to his voice now.

Eleven's jaw clenched, and she looked back at Hopper, "By 5-1-5?" she asked, her eyes buoyant again.

"5:15. Yeah, sure." He corrected nonchalantly.

Eleven's eyelids fluttered down, and then back to Hopper, "Promise?"

Hopper stirred comfortably in his chair, leaning closer to Eleven. "Yes." He answered confidently, "I promise."

It took a few seconds of silence before she responded. "Halfway happy," She shrugged, picking up her knife and fork.

Hopper smirked to himself, watching her as she took small bites of her French toast. He ruffled her short brown tresses, exhaling a laugh, and Eleven gave a quirked smile back, chewing on her French toast.

It was a very somber day, for the two of them.

Hopper had left shortly after, a cold cup of Joe in one hand, and a bag of lunch Naomi had made him in the other. Naomi showered, and then El, and the both of them spent the afternoon making some Halloween treats. Naomi wasn't very good at making food, but she was better at baking at least than nothing. She enjoyed watching

Eleven eye the oven every 5 seconds to check if they were done cooking.

'Not yet,' she would say, and Eleven would wander the small cabin for another two minutes until she came back.

They made a batch of very runny icing, and Naomi tried to dye it a black color with some supplies in the kitchen. It ended up being a lumpy mix of brown, which resembled dirt, and they iced them too quickly which meant the frosting ran off the top of the muffins.

"How is Mike?" Naomi asked as she watched Eleven eat one of the cupcakes. She asked it so imperturbably, it almost threw Eleven off, if it weren't for her asking that every day since the visit with Mike in the Void.

"Good," She replied somberly, swinging her legs off the side of the kitchen counter she sat on. "Halloween today"

Naomi nodded, already informed from her previous stunt. Halloween used to be her favorite day of the year. Dressing up as someone else, surprisingly, made her feel more like herself. That day was ruined for her though considering that exactly four years ago today she was turned. She had normally spent ever other Halloween alone and depressed in some motel or barn, hiding out and drinking booze to forget the sinful anniversary. Not this year, though. She was going to make something good out of it with El.

"Dressing up as a ghost-buster" She said the word in two short syllables, pronouncing the 'bust' very prominently which made Naomi laugh a little "From a movie," She explained, to which Naomi nodded.

They were quiet for a long while, and Naomi had started to clean up their small mess they had made in the bungalow.

"He's lost."

Naomi glanced over her shoulder from her spot at the sink.

"Not Mike," She added, dusting the crumbs off of her hands. "Not himself." She hopped off the counter, making her way to the bedroom. Naomi bit her lip, her mind gyrating with the constant

debate of whether she wanted to be on Hopper's side, or Eleven's. Frankly, she wanted to be on both.

El came trotting out moments later with a rugged stuffed bear Hopper had got her on her 'birthday' (they had just made the day up randomly in the year since they had celebrated Naomi and Hopper's this past year), and a blanket. She flicked on the television with her mind, and started surfing the channels, tilting her head to the right ever so slightly to go higher. She hugged the bear closely and wrapped the blue blanket over herself.

She stopped at their usual mid-day channel, and frowned.

Naomi laughed, dropping the last dish into the drying rack. "Probably not on," She referred to Days of Our Lives, their typical show to watch weekday afternoons, "They play cheesy horror movies all day on Halloween normally." She joined her partner in crime on the couch, and brought a small box that she had grabbed from the bookshelf along with her.

She set the box out, sitting on the floor as Eleven lay vertically on the couch, using her bear as a pillow to prop her head while she watched Frankenstein intently.

Naomi flipped the box over, powering out hundreds of pieces of a 500-piece Vincent Van Gogh starry night puzzle.

She got to work, and a few hours later she was mostly finished. Eleven had fallen asleep on the sofa, and she found it the right time to go grab a snack.

She grabbed a bag from the fridge, puncturing it with her teeth. As she drank, she drew the curtains by the kitchen window, figuring it wouldn't hurt to peak. No one to tattle on her either, not that she didn't trust Eleven. It looked like a pretty sunny, but chilly fall day. There was a certain excitement to Halloween that she couldn't describe. There was a light whistle from the wind in the trees, and a quiet knocking noise from the side of the lodge from a loose piece of weather board.

It was just hitting five o'clock, meaning Hopper would be back soon.

The light breeze blew some of the orange leaves around, spiraling them in a mini tornado on the forest floor.

She sighed, her lips catching on a piece of plastic on the back. She whizzed over to the junk drawer to grab the pair of scissors she knew Hopper kept it there. She could have tore it, but she would've made a mess of herself, and Hopper screamed at her the last time she had stained the floor with A positive. There was so much crap in there, but eventually she managed to find them. She snipped a bit of the plastic away from the blood bag and dropped them back in the drawer.

Stuck to the very back of the drawer, though, was a Polaroid photo that caught her eyes She could only see the back of it, a name written on it. 'Terry Ives' the name rang a bell and she thought it was the name of Eleven's birth mother, if she remembered correctly. She snatched the photo up, flipping the fragile piece of paper over.

The woman in the photo looked young. She looked happy, she was smiling. She had dark hair, and was wearing a long night gown. Her gummy smile was high, and her eyes squinted in the same way that Eleven's did the night of the fireworks. Her eyes were light in color, an off-hazel. Behind her, another woman stood with short hair. She resembled the woman in a way, a relative maybe. She was making a funny face behind her back.

Naomi smirked at the photo, dropping it back in the drawer. When she finished the last drops of the bag, she spun around, and jumped. "Jeez, El!" She clutched her chest, "A group of Hunter's? No. Hopper? No. Anyone else? No. Somehow you manage to sneak up and scare the living shit out of me, though." She thought back to this morning where she frightened Hopper in the exact same spot.

She tossed the empty bag in trash, and moved back to the sofa.

"It's beeping,"

"Hmm?" She responded, turning back to her puzzle.

"Hop."

She glanced at the receiver beside the television, to which Eleven was already trotting over to. Hopper was sending a series of dashes and dot's through the speaker from his truck. Eleven looked at the sign above the receiver, her fingers following the repetition of dashes and dots that blew out of the speaker, trying to transcribe his message

Dot ,dash, dot, dot, pause. Dot, dash, pause. Dash, pause. Dot, pause.

"Late," they both said at the same time, Eleven from the receiver, Naomi from her spot on the floor.

Naomi could sense the immediate disappointment. Eleven's body slouched, and she released a long puff of air.

Another series of dots and dashes sounded, and Eleven translated it to be the number 8.

"8:00," Naomi made a disgusted face, "What the hell has him caught up for 2 hours and forty-five minutes? God."

Eleven shuffled angrily to the couch, ignoring the repetition of dashes and dot's that followed. He usually repeated it a few times, in case we didn't have time to get to it right away. She reeked of irritation and petulant, and it was a chemo-signal that Naomi didn't enjoy. "Knock it off, kid, you reek." She had explained what chemo signals were to Eleven, and only recently had she started to understand them.

"Promised" She replied begrudgingly, referring back to Hopper's swear earlier to be back by 5-1-5 with candy and Dracula.

"He is the chief, though," Naomi argued.

Eleven hated it when Naomi stood up for Hopper. She liked it better when they were on the same side; but Naomi couldn't always play good cop. She resumed her position of laying vertically, using her bear as a pillow. She tuned back into whatever horror flick was playing on the television.

Naomi could sense the heat radiating from Eleven's body, although she tried to ignore it. Eleven changed the channels, Naomi seeing a small tilt of her head to the right to do so.

She flipped and flipped and flipped, surfing over and over, passing the same channels again and again. She did so for another two minutes, all while Naomi was putting the last pieces of the puzzle together. She grew annoyed, but didn't say anything for the next minute.

When Eleven flicked past them even faster, the tv flickering different shades of the rainbow, Naomi had had enough. "God! Would you stop?" It wasn't very often that Naomi grew annoyed with Eleven, but it did happen. "I can't take that anymore, it's like a ticking clock." She sat up from her criss-crossed position on the dusty hardwood, and sped over to the junk drawer by the fridge. She shuffled through the cabinet until she found a flashlight, and tossed it on the table. She also grabbed a black marker, that was close to running out, and added it to the pile on the counter.

"What are you doing?" Eleven asked, taking small steps towards her in her cocoon of a blanket.

"Taking you trick or treating." She grumbled back, moving past her to grab a pillowcase from the bedroom. She tossed it at Eleven, who caught it with hasty reflexes.

Eleven just looked at her, eyes as wide as saucers.

"8:00 o'clock, right? That gives us a while. Time to spare, even. Now get ready. We might be able to just catch them going out before we have to get back." She insisted.

"But Hop—"

"Do you wanna go? Or not?" God, she was such a bad influence. She knew it, too. She had sworn to herself to make this god forbidden anniversary of her freaking death day to be better than the last 3 years she spent moping, though.

Without a reply, Eleven snatched up the white sheet that still remained on the dining room chair from this morning.

They had ran there on foot, Eleven on Naomi's back as she flew

through the forest at an unthinkable speed. The second they made it to the tree line, Naomi placed the white sheet over Eleven's head, and tied a black sheet around her neck—like a cape. They walked the rest of the way.

Eleven's ability to find people no matter what circumstance, led them to a busy street somewhere on the Northeast side of town. It still boggled Naomi's mind—she didn't question her tracking abilities though.

Eleven had helped Naomi draw a long widow's peak in the middle of her forehead by her hairline, and Naomi didn't bother to hide her exposed fangs or red eyes. Maybe more realistic and advanced than most costumes, considering it was the real deal, but no one would really question the vampire on Halloween night.

"Just stay close and remember what I said, alright?" She glanced at the white figure beside her, one arm pressed firmly to her back as they walked hastily up a hill.

"Stay out of their site, no talking to them, and we're only stopping at a few houses." She recited to Naomi.

"Exactly," She nodded, trudging further up the hill. "You're sure they're up here?"

"Yes." She retorted quickly.

They walked for another five minutes or so, no traces of ghost busters in site. The street was buzzing with activity, so much that it made both of them nervous. Hopefully there was no Hopper prowling the streets ensuring that kids were safe on such a demanding night.

"How about we stop here?" Naomi pointed a thumb to the upcoming house on their right, a few kids just leaving the gated yard. It was painted blue, but the overgrown moss and the peeling made it appear more grey in color—brown even.

She could see slight movement underneath the sheet that resembled a somewhat nod.

They walked up the wooden porch steps, and Naomi knocked for

Eleven—after coming up short when hunting for a door bell.

The door opened, a bigger women with a bright smile and curly hair looking down upon her. "Oh! Aren't you just an adorable little ghost... Third one I've seen tonight!"

Eleven didn't say anything for a moment, and Naomi nudged her with her elbow. She saw her shake quickly. "Trick-or-treat," She said very broken, like she had done this morning.

"Here you go!" She reached into her pumpkin-shaped bowl and grabbed three pieces of sweets, dropping them in to Eleven's grungy-looking pillow case.

"Thank you," She responded, closing her pillow case and walking away from the door.

Naomi followed, hearing the door shut behind her. They passed a few star wars characters on the way out Naomi replaced her hand on Eleven's back again, and gave her shoulder a gentle reassuring squeeze as they started up the last part of the hill, again.

"How was your first trick-or-treat, kid?"

El shrugged, and Naomi could hear her let out a very soft giggle.

Naomi thought back to her first recollection of trick-or-treating with her family. She even remembered her father being there. They must have just turned 6, at the time. It was a family costume, all of them Disney characters. Naomi was snow white, her favorite princess, Theo was Prince Charming from Cinderella, and their parents were Mickey and Minnie.

Naomi smiled, "Come on," She insisted, continuing their trek, whilst keeping their eyes and ears open for Venkmann and his pals.

They hit up a few more houses on the way; not too many that would make the candy-filled pillow case difficult to hide when Hopper came home, though. It was enough that Eleven's eyes lit up as wide as they could possibly go with the small holes cut out for them. She had a small stash starting, and Naomi let her take a quick bite of the kit-kat before they hit the next house.

"It's—it's like totaaaaally tubular!"

"Totally tubular!"

"What a gnarly wave, dude!"

Both of their heads spun to the group of kids walking on the other side of the road, walking in the opposite direction as them. Eleven didn't need supernatural hearing to hear the boisterous voices.

"That them?" Naomi regarded towards the group of three, followed by a couple behind them. They both slowed their walk, trying not to be obvious about staring at them.

Eleven again, without speaking, did a slow nod.

Naomi analyzed the small crowd. At the front, she saw a dark-skinned boy with neatly styled hair, dressed in a ghost busters costume, his shoulder pressing against a short red-head around the same age, dressed as Michael Myers. Beside her, a boy with a wild mop of curls, even crazier than Eleven's, was dressed as a ghost buster two, a small black box with caution tape in his right hand while his left held a half-full pillow case of candy. That must have been Dustin and Lucas, although she had no idea who the girl was.

Behind them, she saw two boys. One boy was the shortest of them all, very skinny. He was clad in the same costume. He had a neat bowl cut, and she could see from over here how his eyes scanned worriedly over the large crowd around him trick-or-treating. That left Will.

The next ghost-buster walking closely beside him, she had seen before. Michael Wheeler: in the flesh. Mike looked exactly like she had seen him in Eleven's visits. Dark hair, dusted with freckles. He would've been slightly taller than her, lanky looking but standing straight.

"Hey! Ha-ha! A ghost..." An eager Dustin came sprinting across the street, trying to hold all of his supplies together—keeping them from falling as he darted towards Naomi and Eleven.

"Shit," She cursed under her breath. She squeezed Eleven's shoulder, "Don't say anything. Remember what I said, El." God, she sounded

like Hop.

His friends followed closely behind Dustin, scurrying around other kids to try to pursue him. Dustin skidded to a stop right in front of them, starting to shake what looked like the head of a vacuum cleaner in Eleven's face, which she tried to swat away. "I've caught you in my proton pack! A-ha!" He gave another victorious laugh, a bright toothy grin on his face as he shook the black box on his hand.

"Sorry!" Lucas came sprinting after him, followed closely by the girl, and then Mike and Will. "He's been doing that all night to the ghosts he's been seeing." He swatted Dustin on the back of the head, to which he responded with a simple 'ow'. "You'd be surprised how popular ghost costumes are this year..." he gave a forged laughter, his hands folding behind his back to appear innocent.

A very grumpy looking Mike glanced at Eleven.

Taking no chances, Naomi pulled Eleven into a tight squeeze, covering her eyes.

Mike, as well as the others, shot her an scrutinizing stare.

"Sorry..." She explained, still embracing El, "My sister get's nervous around strangers. She's homeschooled. Doesn't get out much..."

Wasn't totally a lie, she thought to herself.

"No biggie," Dustin shrugged.

"Come on, stalkers, let's go. Full-sized musketeers are calling our name." The red-head waved them away, and the boys quickly followed, leaving only Will and Mike looking at the embracing two. Naomi flashed them a naive smile, and Mike shot them back an anomalous look. Eleven struggled to remove herself from the hold, and Naomi was surprised her will-power had lasted even this long. She knew she could hold the girl down, but she decided she didn't feel like being flipped into a lamppost by a telekinetic girl today, so she released her.

Just as Mike and Will were about to retreat Eleven grabbed Mike's clothed arm. He started to freak out initially, until Eleven held out a

Mars bar to him.

Again, with furrowed brows he shot her a peculiar glance, but he took the candy from her hands. "T-Thanks..." He stuttered, walking away with Will by his side.

Naomi and Eleven watched from the top of the hill as the two descended down after their friends. They stayed like that for half a minute, and El caught Mike shooting her back a quick glance before running up to catch the others.

"Who was the redhead?" She asked, trying to stir conversation up as she could sense Eleven's uneasiness and fragility after finally seeing her friends after almost a year of waiting.

"Not sure," She responded.

"Sorry kiddo," She urged Eleven back up the hill after another minute of watching their backs, "I know that must've been tough for you."

This time, El said nothing.

They lay in bed, Naomi on the air mattress, squeaking around to get comfy while Eleven faced away from her in the single bed beside her. They could hear Hopper's light snore from their bedroom; a noise they were accustomed to after almost a year of being roommates in the tight space.

Eleven had made her call earlier to Mike through the television. She had pulled it into their room again. She was happy to hear that he had mentioned the mysterious ghost delivering him a candy bar. She got upset, again, hearing about something that had happened to Will, and how Mike mentioned that he really needed her again. Naomi tried to give her her space this time, and didn't question the tears that fell from her eyes, although it killed her not to. She wasn't happy to hear that Hopper was going to be another two hours late, making it nearly 11:00pm by the time he got home.

El had still had a great time on their secret outing (that Hopper still hadn't discovered) but Naomi hated seeing how thwarted she was

from not watching movies and pigging out on candy with Hopper like she was so excited for.

She hated broken promises.

"Friends don't lie." That was her saying. Hopper promising to be home to watch Dracula with her and falling through was essentially a lie. He had tried to bribe her out of her room, but she didn't budge.

Naomi, as per usual, tried to stay out of it. Hopper had pleaded with her to get her to come to the living room to watch Dracula, but she declined, knowing Eleven was stubborn as hell and wouldn't shift even by her demands.

"I suck at this whole parenting thing," he had moaned, chewing on a toffee while he ran a frustrated hand over his face.

"No you don't," She retorted, cleaning up the puzzle from earlier. "She's just frustrated. She was excited, that's all. It's different then doing stuff with me. She likes hanging out with you, gives her some form of fatherly love, I think."

He winced at the word 'father'.

"Just give her some time to blow off some steam."

Hopper groaned, flicking the wrapper of the toffee on the wooden coffee table.

Just as Naomi was about to shut her eyes, she heard Eleven shuffle in her bed, facing towards her in the bed. She glanced at Naomi from above. "Thank you," She said, folding her hands up to her face as she gifted Naomi a pleased gaze.

"You're welcome," Naomi responded, knowing full well what she was referring to.

It had been a while since Naomi had seen Eleven fall asleep with a smile on her lips.

A/N: Enjoy! Please read and review. Also, I have 'halfway happy'

tattooed on me so there's that. Please let me know your thoughts from this chapter, and constructive criticism is always welcomed (in a kind manner).

9. Chapter 9: Gone

A/N: Apologies in advance if this chapter follows to closely to the show, I hope I made it as different as I could for these specific scenes! I do not own Stranger Things, or Netflix. Only my OC.

The tapping sunlight of the blazing star in the sky woke her bright and early, and the rays of the cold autumn morning streaked across the bedroom. El's bed was vacant, the television pulled closely to the foot of her bed still.

She yawned, rolling over on the squeaky mattress as she repositioned herself, shutting her eyes to catch a few more minutes of slumber before Hopper left for work and Eleven would nudge her awake to keep her from boredom.

Whilst her eyes were closed, she kept her ears open to the voices around her, and the sounds of cutlery hitting plates, with full mouths chewing on breakfast.

"You visited him again last night?" Hopper questioned Eleven between chomps of food.

She took a moment to reply. *"He says he needs me,"* She sourly remarked.

"You want me to go check on him?"

A silence followed, Naomi knowing that she must've just nodded. Naomi shifted again, curling the blanket closer to her face. They must have cooled off from last night.

"I know that you miss him, all right?" He paused, *"But, it's too dangerous. You're the last thing he needs right now."* Not exactly the choice of words Naomi would've gone with, but she continued without disrupting the two that seemed to be getting along after last night's quarrel. *"You're gonna see him, soon—and not just in that head of yours."* His voice was exceptionally tender as per usual, and Naomi noted the

way that he often spoke to Eleven with such gentleness, as if she was fragile; as if she would break. It was only a matter of time before she did. *"You're gonna see him in real life."* The optimism in his voice was tangible. *"I feel like I'm making progress with these people,"* he exposed, emphasizing the word 'progress'.

There was a long silence that followed.

She thought that Eleven had probably dropped it and got to eating her breakfast, but just as she felt like she was going to snooze off again, Eleven spoke.

"Friends. Don't. Lie."

"What?"

Naomi shot out of bed.

"You say soon, on day 21."

Naomi stood from the bed, pulling her nightgown down and ripping the door open.

"You say soon, on day 205."

They both acknowledged her presence with a glance, but didn't remove themselves from their stare-off match that they were having at the kitchen table. Eleven glowered at Hopper, her hands gripping the wooden table, while Hopper stared at her, mystified and angry all at the same time.

*"You **now** say soon on day 326?"*

"Eleven," Naomi warned.

Eleven, who usually followed her like a puppy, worshipped her unrelated sister, was now ignoring her. She knew how stubborn the two were, and how neither of them would back down.

Hopper felt flustered, it was obvious. The blood rose to his face, and he fiddled with his uniform's pocket as he spoke back to her in an accusatory tone. "What is this? You're counting the days now like

you're some kind of prisoner?"

"When is 'soon'?" She barked condemningly

Hopper shrugged, "Soon is when... it's not dangerous anymore," He avoided eye contact with her, fiddling with the button on his pouch some more.

"When?" She demanded, her hands folded together as she attempted a gentler approach.

He opened his mouth to say something, but stopped himself, shrugging as he sighed in defeat. "I don't know..." he exhaled in a single breath.

"On day 500?"

"I don't know."

"Eleven," She regarded the girl with furrowed brows, and Eleven just scowled at the man in front of her.

"On day 600?"

"I don't know."

"On day 700?" Her voice rose dangerously loud.

"I. Don't. Know."

"On day 800?" She slammed her palms against the table, leering towards the Chief.

"No—"

"I need to see him!"

"Eleve—"

She watched the scene spiral out of control from there. Her palms slammed the wooden table, cutlery flying off of it. The plates with eggo's and melting whip cream scattered towards Hopper, Eleven's head tipping upright labeling her as the culprit for telekinetic

meltdown.

"OH! SHIT!" He looked at Eleven angrily, his hands upturned as whip cream and syrup dripped from his fingertips. A mess of chocolate and syrup coated the front of his uniform while he cursed again. "SHIT!"

Naomi watched as the creases in Eleven's forehead got tighter, and she glared at Hopper, clenched fists by her side. **"Friends... don't... lie..."**

She stomped away from Hopper towards the bedroom, the second she entered, her hand flew back and the door slammed shut in the blink of an eye.

Hopper and Naomi were left in silence, staring at each other bug-eyed as they reveled in what had just occurred.

Naomi stood, in her nightgown still, with her arms at her side. Her short hair was messily strewn about from her early awakening and her mouth was ajar. "I..." She didn't know what to say. She had no words.

Hopper just replaced himself back in his seat, his hands massaging his face as he let out a deep sigh.

For once, she really truly saw Hopper's side. He could see how scared he was, and how he tried to hide it under the layers of gruff and authority, but he cared for the girl like she was his own blood. She could see it was hurting him to discipline her from seeing Mike and her friends. Most off all, she could see how frustrated he was from this one-of a kind situation he had himself raveled in with this kid.

"It's not your fault,"

His head churned towards her.

"You're just trying to protect her, I get it." She spoke reassuringly, her hand reaching out to Hopper, "I do."

He groaned: a common noise that eradicated from Hopper's furry mouth. "I get where's she's coming from... I just—"

Naomi touched his hand reassuring, the pads of her fingertips frivolously grazing across his calloused knuckles. The second they made contact, the black veins snaked up her arms and she felt the sting; like she had scolded her hand on a hot pot. She recoiled immediately, and dropped her hand to her side.

Hopper was in pain.

He looked embarrassed as he wiped the food off of him with a damp cloth. He hated showing vulnerability. Obviously it wasn't physical pain; it was emotional. Naomi could tell, because often times when she took pain away from physical wounds like lacerations and punctures, she felt a hot burning sensation. It would sting as it moved from her fingertips, up her arm, and to her heart before it dissipated in her body. This was a cold pain; it made her feel numb, paralyzed even.

She walked away from the situation, not acknowledging what had just occurred and spoke as she made her way to the kitchen to make them both a cup of coffee. "I'll talk to her."

She did try to, throughout the day. Hopper left moments after that and she knocked on the door every so often to check on El. She opened it only once, to request to be left alone for a few moments, and to deliver some clothes to Naomi. She was very polite about it, but stern as well.

Naomi read and watched TV, and was mostly jaded for the bulk of the morning. She kept checking on Eleven, but it was the same as before.

She couldn't hear any noises coming from the room either; besides a few shuffles of the feet and scuffs against the hardwood. She wasn't visiting Mike; she just sat there in her room. Alone. It wasn't until around 1:30pm rolled around that she finally head from her.

The door flew open, and she stood at her presence finally.

Eleven still looked... angry. Flustered. She was upset. Her first sign of knowing these emotions was that the door had flew open from her mind. She didn't use her powers all that much, as Hopper told her to

keep them on the down low in case when they did go out in public one day she wouldn't be allowed to use them. He didn't want her to make a habit out of it. Her second flag, was the glowering expression she wore as she paraded to the kitchen windows, pushing the curtains aside and raising the blinds.

"Eleven—" Naomi started, dropping her book to the coffee table as she cautiously took step towards the girl. Whatever mission she had just launched didn't look like something Hopper would approve of.

"I'm going to see Mike," She avowed as she shrugged on a green and black jacket, moving towards the door.

"Oh no you—"

"I am." El wasn't giving her a choice, it was obvious.

"Eleven."

"I went out yesterday!" She argued, barely waiting for her name to even leave Naomi's lips.

"Yes! She ridiculed, "With a white sheet covering your entire body so no one could see you."

"Mike." She said unyieldingly.

Naomi whizzed over to Eleven, just as she unlatched the six bolts, and grabbed her by the bicep. Instinctively, Eleven thrust her head up; using her abilities to toss Naomi a few feet in the air. Her butt skidded along the floor until she met the side of the couch.

Naomi was shocked—and to be honest, she felt a bit odd. The sensation was like being dragged toward a magnet. Her body felt paralyzed, like an unseen force had pushed her. It was something she knew even her strength couldn't tackle. She wouldn't lie either, she was slightly offended by Eleven's out of character behavior today.

Naomi hadn't regretted the visit yesterday, but she was starting to question whether it was a good idea, since Eleven's knew quest to see Mike was so demanding and frontal today.

Eleven immediately flushed a bright pink, and her face softened. "I'm sorry." She apologized, her hand spread outwards towards her. Naomi took it, hoisting herself up with her hand, but not without giving her a confused scowl. "I'm sorry" she repeated, "But I'm going to see Mike." She rushed over to the door again, pausing as she made it to the frame. "Will you come with me?"

At this point, she didn't have a choice. She couldn't let her go unsupervised.

Naomi fluttered over to the coat rack, grabbing her infamous leather jacket to match her sweater and fishnets, with her black shorts on top.

She followed Eleven out the door, watching as she stepped over the trip wire Hopper and her made so long ago. She barely picked it up, but she heard Eleven mutter, "not stupid" as she planted both feet on the other side of it.

They had made it to the school, but not after a horrific encounter with a mother and her young child at the park. Eleven had gotten... agitated; distracted, maybe. She wasn't sure. She was a way's behind Eleven, giving her her needed space. She had barely lost a prospect on her. She had just started to light the head of her cigarette, when she heard a woman calling out to Eleven, asking where her parents were. Next thing you knew, Naomi was running up to catch up to her, and the swing directly behind the two people was twirling rapidly around in circles, defying gravity as the chains of the park swing were held taught against it.

The second the couple turned, Naomi swooped up Eleven; placing her on her back, and they sprinted to the school at an unfathomable speed.

Once they had made it, Naomi dropped Eleven, who was struggling to free herself from her sieze.

"What the hell was that?" She seethed at Eleven, truly feeling like an older sibling now. It reminded her of the way she used to scold Theo after stealing some of her toys.

She just frowned, brows knitting together.

Naomi exhaled deeply, "You're lucky I have freaking super-speed, kid. You have to calm down, okay? Control whatever's going on with you today."

She wasn't particularly happy about it, but she nodded, exhaling through flared nostrils.

Naomi sighed again, pulling Eleven into her side. "Come on," She muttered, feeling El start to release her taught posture as she pressed into her side, "Let's go see your Mike."

"What were you talking to her about anyways?" She continued, hand still pressed on the fore of Eleven's back as they made their way past a pair of yellow school busses.

"Asking where the school was," She answered more calmly.

"Ah,"

They walked around to the front of the school, and Naomi still kept El close to her side, afraid that if she lost sight of her again someone might steal her from her. School had been over for a good ten or fifteen minutes, at this point, and the last of the kids waiting around for rides were left in the parking lot a distance away.

"He's still here," El pointed with her right hand to the set of bikes in the bike rack along the path to the entrance.

El moved from her side to the bikes, and stood, analyzing them like they were some prized treasure. She had specifically singled out a white and silver one with long handle bars and a headlight. Naomi watched as she held her breath, her hand touching one of the bars gently. Eleven's jaw clenched, and Naomi couldn't tell if the sniffle that followed after was from the cold, or the memories that were etched in El's brain of Mike Wheeler and his bike.

"Let's go," She muttered softly, her head regarding towards the school.

Eleven nodded politely, running back to her side as they entered the

school together.

"Can you pick up his scent?" She asked as they made their way up the concrete steps.

"I mean, I didn't get that great of one last night... but I could try." She shrugged.

Eleven smiled for the first time that day.

They entered the deserted halls, and Naomi shivered—memories of her middle school flushing back to her. What a normal life she had lived back then; a mother and a brother who loved her, her only problem being her D- in Math class. Little did she know she would lose everyone she loved only less than a decade later.

"Right," She instructed after picking up some sort of scent that remotely resembled the one she had smelt last night. He kind of smelt like... Honey. That was the best way for her to describe his specific aroma. She hoped she was picking up his, and not Dustin, Will, or Lucas'. "Right again."

Eleven took the pilot, walking with purpose until she made it until the next fork in the hallway. "Left," They were getting closer now. The smell was much more potent. She flared her nostrils, closing her eyes as if that would emphasize his odor.

"Right," She lead one more time, and they slowed to a stop down a hall way. It lead straight, going down a set of stairs. At the bottom of the stairs was a wide hallway, and to the right it opened up. If you were to go straight, you would exit out of the side door of Hawkins Middle School.

She listened for voices.

"—*Lucas is our ranger, and El's our mage!*" It was Mike, for sure. He was arguing with someone, by the sounds of it.

"Down there," She pointed to the only turn in the hallway.

Eleven sped ahead of her, zipping down the stairs and darting around the hallway.

Naomi followed closely behind, heeding as she observed Eleven peering through the windows into Hawkins Middle School's very own gymnasium.

"I could do that too if I spent all day practicing!"

Naomi watched as the boy stood in the center of the gym. Around him, a girl encompassed him with circles on her worn skateboard. She had long, red locks, and she recognized her to be Michael Myers from the previous night.

Mike appeared annoyed but he stifled a laugh, his head following the girl as she made rounds. The red-head was jovial as she made loops, laughing at one point.

Her eyes shifted to Eleven, who was closely pressed to the double doors and peering through the glass to see Mike. Her face was difficult to read. Her emotions were exploding like a geyser, and she studied the two in the gym with scrutiny.

Her delicate hands lifted to the frame of the windows, curling around the border as she watched with impassive eyes. With gritted teeth and a slight pout, she cocked her head to the right ever so slightly, watching the redhead fall as expected. Her board slipped from underneath her and she toppled with a light 'thud', Mike running to her side.

Naomi grabbed Eleven's arm in caution, but to be quite guileless she found the action sort of comical. Some strange form of jealousy had washed over the girl. That jealousy was quickly replaced with sorrow as Mike ran to the girl's aid, pulling her erect again.

"What happened?"

"I don't know... it was like a magnet or something was pulling on my board."

"Let's go," she stipulated with a broken voice, her arm sliding up so Naomi's hand fell into hers. She squeezed Naomi's hand, towing her down the hallway. Just before Naomi made it out of view, she saw a hopeful Mike sprinting towards them.

They took their time walking back from the school. El said nothing on the way back, and Naomi was okay with that. It was a comfortable silence. She clung to Naomi's arm, partially because with the sun setting it made everything colder, and partially because she needed someone right now.

She was close to her breaking point, and it was so obvious to her after seeing her numb state after Mike.

They trudged through the foliage, and from their spot in the trees they could see the lights from the cottage brightly lit between the spaces of vegetation.

She lit a cigarette with her free hand, placing it between her lips, and lighting it with her notorious red zippo, preparing herself for the storm that was about to ensue. She hated fighting. She absolutely despised it. Her mind drifted back to memories of her parents cursing at each other outside her and her brother's door.

She so badly wished she had a human Theodore by her side to experience this through with her.

Like El, she could only stay strong for so long, as well.

Matching her exact stature, Hopper stood on the porch, a cigarette between his lips as his uniform's hat covered his face with dancing shadows. Only his lips and chin were visible in the dim orange that lit up from the butt of his smoke.

El removed her linked arm and walked ahead of Naomi, angrily marching towards the front steps.

Hopper took a step forward as Eleven paused a few foot in front of him. His face was now visible in the yellow light of the porch lamp, and he pressed his cigarette but into the ash tray, crushing it more than necessary.

An owl hooted in the distance.

Eleven walked up the creaky steps and walked through the already ajar front door. Naomi, aggravating Hopper even more, flashed inside; only a trail of dirt flurrying behind her. Hopper blinked, and

suddenly she had disappeared within.

She heard Hopper tramp after them, slamming the door with obvious agitation. "Friends **don't** lie. Isn't that your bullshit saying?"

Eleven acted as if he wasn't there, and paced to her room, her hand on the door ready to close it.

"Hey! Hey!" He protested, "Don't walk away from me!" He growled at her, stopping the door with his hand and slamming it back, making Naomi wince.

Naomi watched as Hopper placed one hand on the door frame, ready to interrogate the girl like he was one of his suspects. "Where'd you go on your little field trip? Huh?" He pressed.

Eleven removed her jacket, breathing greatly through flared nostrils.

Hoppers chin jutted, and she could see the veins on his neck. "Where?" He repeated.

"We were at the school," Naomi sighed once Eleven had refused to answer with a shake of her head.

Hopper pivoted his stance widening. He stabbed a finger at her, "Oh I'll deal with you later," He hissed, "You don't get to speak."

"He didn't see me," she publicized, her eyes avoiding both the Chief and her.

Hopper relaxed, moving into the bedroom without looking at her. "Yeah, well, that mother and her daughter did... and they called the cops." He moved to the end of her bed, facing her with angry eyes as he gripped the footboard. "Now. Did anyone else see you... **Anyone.**" He stressed. "Come on!" He urged after a few passing seconds. "I need you think, Eleven."

"No one saw us, Hop." Naomi answered for her. She shifted her weight as she placed her hands on her hips.

He glared at her.

"You put us in danger," He spat in disgust, starting to pace. "Both of you, you realize that, right?" His eyes darted from both girls.

Eleven jolted forward, stabbing a finger as she prepared to tear down Hoppers throat. "**You** promised, I go..." The last word faltered as tears started to load in her eyes. She took a second to breath, and started again, much louder, much angrier now. "And I never leave! Nothing ever happens!" She threw her hands in the air heatedly.

"YEAH!" He moved to the dresser, "Nothing ever happens and you stay *SAFE!*" He slammed the wooden dresser, the lamp shaking from the impact. His head fell to his palm, as white knuckles grasped the wooden frame of the dresser.

"YOU LIE!" she quarreled, leering towards him.

"I don't lie! I protect and I feed, and I teach!" He argued back. "And all I ask of you is three simple rules.... Three rules. AND NEITHER OF YOU CAN DO EVEN THAT!" He turned to Naomi this time, and she visibly saw split flying from his mouth as he growled at her.

Naomi watched Eleven's face contort in displeasure.

Naomi was at a loss for words. Her emotions overflowed like a dam, and all she could do was speak what was on her mind. "What did you expect Hopper?" She gestured towards the door, "Keep here for five years or so until everyone forgets? Until her hair grows out? Until no one recognizes her anymore?"

"No one is asking you to stay here, Naomi!" He bickered back.

She could feel her eyes flare a bright red, and she lips pulled together in a white line.

"You were supposed to keep her safe!" He was yelling so stridently that his voice started to crack, and he took threatening steps towards her. "All I asked of you was to keep her safe!"

She shrunk back, anger fueling her like a fiery rage in the pit of her stomach. "I had no choice, Hopper!"

"You're an adult, Naomi! Act like one."

The words struck a chord in her, and as he started to pace away from her, she whizzed in front of him, stopping him from inflowing the kitchen with a wide stance.

"Put your freaking fangs away and act like a human being for once." She hadn't noticed the shift, but she could feel the heat from underneath her eyes as veins snaked down them, and she could feel the burning sensation of her gums as her fangs came back into place.

"Don't speak to me like that." She said with a slight lisp from her fangs. "You can't just use her to replace the hole in your heart, Hopper." She had said that line another time they fought, and she meant it.. She stabbed a finger in his chest, and it was one of the first times Hopper had realized her brute strength, as he rubbed his sternum as he hissed in a breath.

"I asked you one thing." He tried to speak with a calmer demeanor, but she could read him all too well. She knew he was exploding inside. "I asked you one thing and you fuck that up, too."

She shoved him square in the chest, sending him back a few steps.

She immediately regretted the action, as he bounced back filled with even more rage. "Why are you here," He chuckled, his head shaking as if it was the most comical thing he had seen. "I mean, I just don't get it."

"You asked me to stay, Hopper."

"Yeah well, I change my mind," He grumbled as he moved past her to the fridge. "You're grounded, Eleven." He spoke louder, so she could hear from the bedroom. "You know what that means? It means no Eggos—" He tore boxes out of the fridge and Naomi watched as they clattered to the floor, the frozen contents spilling out. "And no TV," He barred towards the television, and El emerged from the bedroom. "For a week," He placed his hands on either side of the television rack, and shook it. It didn't budge, so he tried again.

Eleven dropped both her hands to her side, spreading her fingers out, and she lowered her head. Blood dripped from her one nostril, as usual, and she glowered at him.

"All right, knock it off. Let go."

She shook her head slowly.

He shook it again, grunting.

"Okay, two weeks."

He tried to lift it again, but to no avail, it didn't dislodge. "Let go," She could see he was losing his patience with her.

Again, she shook her head.

"A month!"

"No," She said very clearly.

He started to pant, "Well, congratulations. You just graduated from no TV for a month, to no TV at all!" He spat the last word, as he yanked the cable from the socket and a loud buzzing noise emitted throughout the room.

"NO!" She screamed. She ran over to the television, as Hopper paced away, and started fiddling with the antennas as she yelled to herself. "No! No... NO!"

"You have got to understand that there are consequences for your actions—"

She spun around, her brown waves swirling around her head as her brows fell down the bridge of her nose in pure fury. "YOU are like PAPA!"

He chuckled again, leaning against the doorframe of the bathroom now. "Really, huh. I'm like that psychotic son of a bitch?" The room stench like pure anger. The temperature in the room rose a few degrees, and it wasn't from the lit fireplace in the corner of the room. "Wow! All right, you wanna go back in the lab? One phone call... I can make that happen."

"I hate you," She stabbed a finger in the air, her jaw clenching and unclenching as the blood dripped further down her nose and onto her

lip.

"Yeah, well, I'm not so crazy about the both of you."

"She lets me go!" Eleven's finger moved to Naomi's direction, and Naomi felt herself shrink, as if she tried to make herself invisible.

"Yeah well she doesn't know what's good for you! If she really cared she wouldn't let you meander through the whole town!" He screamed. His thunderous voice shook the house, making Naomi shiver. "I decide what's best round here. Frankly, I think she's making things worse."

Eleven just stared at him in disgust.

"People are hunting her for a reason, Eleven."

"STOP IT!" Naomi screamed at him. Although, he was only speaking the truth and that's what frustrated her more than anything.

Eleven gave Naomi a faulty stare. She almost looked... angry. The room was so heated right now that she really couldn't read anyone. She was just so overpowered with anger; hers and there's. Her lips tightened into a thin line, and she started to stomp towards her room.

"HEY!" Hopper protested.

She froze.

"Stop acting like a brat! You wanna go out into the real world? You better grow the hell up, kid."

She cocked her head, fists clenched by her side.

"How about that be your word of the day? Huh? Brat." He moved to the bookshelf, pulling the dictionary out. Why don't we look it up? B-R-A-T. Brat." He tossed the book towards her, and it stopped mid air, Eleven's hand flying up as the book levitated. She curled her lips over her teeth, and pushed her hand out, the book flying towards Hopper.

He swatted it away. "Hey! What the hell is wrong with you?" He lunged towards her, but Eleven moved the couch, knocking into

Hopper's thigh, sending him toppling sideways towards the cushions. He grunted. "Hey!"

She started towards the bedroom again.

"HEY!"

She slammed the door shut with the flick of a wrist, but not before sending the bookshelf hurdling to the floor with a strident crash.

"Open this door!" He slammed his palms against it, but she didn't give way.

Naomi let out a small breath of air, one that could've been mistaken for a laugh, and Hopper spun around, his body heaving breaths as his shoulders rose and fell with each inhale.

"I can't do it anymore," He started towards her, meeting her in the middle of the living room. "I'm done stealing blood bags; I'm done worrying all day wondering if you two have gotten yourself into some sort of danger."

That sentence had an infliction of care somewhere in there, but she ignored it.

"I never asked you to do that stuff!" She shrieked.

He said nothing in return, just stared at her in disbelief.

"What was I here for then?" She raised her brows, her hands flying up. "Huh? Just a babysitter? Someone to watch Eleven and make you a pot of coffee every morning? Pay me in blood bags and the occasional pat on the back?"

He shook his head, "That's not how it was—"

"Then how was it? What went through your mind that first day I showed up on your doorstep?"

"I saved you!" He argued.

"I know!" She yelled, "That wasn't my question," she gulped down a

mouthful of saliva.

He opened his mouth, but only a few gibberish words came out. "I don't—"

"Then why am I here, Hop?"

She pushed past him, her shoulder hitting his. She lifted the bottom of the couch, pushing it to the side to grab her only belonging—the backpack she had brought on the very first night. She had hid it there, and they all knew it was there. She didn't know why she hid it; but it felt private to her, her only real belonging beside her fishnets and her jacket. She reached into her pocket, removing the zippo and her last three smokes, and zipped it into the front pocket. She picked the pack up, and froze as she tightened the strap around her shoulder.

A piece of paper had slipped through the floor boards; and the more she focused, the more she could see a distinct outline of a removable meter of wood underneath the couch. She pushed the couch back further, despite Hopper's protests.

There was a storage area, a padlock locking it.

She flipped the piece of paper and saw the exact same photo that was in Hopper's junk drawer. Terry Ives and the familiar looking woman behind her. It was a photocopied article, and Naomi's hand lifted to her mouth as she read what was on it.

It was concerning but she tossed it to the side, and turned back to the floorboard.

She kneeled to the floor, her hands grasping the lock.

"Nao—"

She held up a finger, and crushed the lock with other hand. She tossed it towards Hopper, and watched as he stared at it in disbelief as it slid to his boots.

She opened the floorboard up, and the first thing she saw was a box with the name 'Ives' on it.

Her head whipped up to Hopper.

"She's alive isn't she?" She whispered to him, angry tears filling her eyes. "Her mother."

"It's not like that Naom—"

"What's it like then, Hop?" She slammed the door shut again, replacing the couch with her brute strength as she shoved the loose piece of paper in her backpack. "Huh?"

He shook his head, speaking quieter. "She's not well. She's mute. Her mental health it's..."

"You couldn't tell her that?"

"Not yet."

"Hop..." She gave him a broken look, and he almost looked guilty. Almost. She let out a loud sigh, and whizzed over to the counter, pulling out a piece of paper towel and a marker since she couldn't hunt down paper. "Well, that's your problem now, Hop."

"Nay..." He muttered, flashing her back to memories of her and her brother, and the name he so infamously used for her.

"Don't...." Tears had betrayed her struggle, and they poured over the brims of her eyelid, falling down her face, and dropping down her chin before they fell to the floor with a silent splash. "Don't call me that."

He shot her a confused glance. "I'm just angry, okay? I'm frustrated." He had tried to soften his voice, bargain with her, but it was too late. He had to learn that there were consequences for *his* actions; *his* words.

She had scribbled quickly (and messily) onto the paper towel, signing her name at the bottom. She tossed the marker across the table and stomped over to Eleven's room.

"Naomi!" He hissed. "Don't. Don't you fucking leave."

"Isn't that what you want?" She growled back angrily, confusion blossoming across her face. "You're right, Hop! I overstayed my welcome. All that stuff you said about staying- even long after you were gone, was bullshit. The promises? Bullshit. You need to figure yourself out, Hopper. I love both of you. I do. I can't stay here anymore though, it was wrong. It was wrong to pretend that I could fit in with you two, it was wrong to believe we had some sort of wayward family." The rage was coming back now, and she was shrieking at him, stabbing fingers and stomping her feet as she spoke, and it wasn't making Hopper happy. "I should never have come. I was being selfish, wanting her and you. I'm no good for either of you. This is not some fucking pity party; either. You said it yourself. You're right—I can't protect her. I can't protect anyone. That's why I'm better off alone. I always have been." She wiped her nose with her jacket sleeve. "This was a mistake."

She slipped the piece of paper towel underneath the door, and started for kitchen

"Fine!" He yelled, "Then go! If that's what you want, then go."

"I will!" She cried, pulling the last two bags of blood from the fridge and shoving them into her backpack. She paced towards the door, her combat boots creaking against the aged floor.

"Don't expect an open door when you start feeling sorry for yourself." He shook his head, pressing his tongue into the side of his cheek.

"You know, I never disagreed with your rules for her. Maybe at first, but I truly believed that you were trying to keep her safe, I do." She clenched her teeth together, "All I was saying was that she needed freedom every once in a while. Compromise. Isn't that **your** bullshit saying?"

"Just go," He rubbed his jaw, shaking his head as he scuffed his foot angrily against the floorboards. "GO!" he screamed.

She could hear a growing scream coming from the bedroom, and everything happened so promptly after that.

Her scream grew, and grew, and kept cultivating until the resonance

blew from her ears and it sounded like she was submerged underwater. She turned towards Hopper, and she could hear the rising pitch in Eleven's shriek. She covered her ears, sprinting towards Hop as she watched the crack line appear in the windows. The fractures spread like a spider web, and she used her last remaining seconds to throw her arms around a cowering Hopper, hands over his own ears. She defended him from the exploding glass that followed and felt the shards strike her back seconds later.

When her hearing had come back a few seconds afterward, she stumbled back, groaning from the tenderness.

Hopper turned to her in disbelief, his hair wildly disheveled upon his head from the blow.

Eleven's telekinetic tantrum left the cabin a dangerous mess, and glass still fell from the windows with a light 'tink' as they hit the floor.

"Naomi—" he started, looking at the shards of glass that were embedded in her body.

He heaved a breath, and tears had started to come to his eyes now.

"No." That was all she could muster up to say. "No." she repeated exhaustedly, grabbing her backpack from its previous spot in the floor. She took one last look at the closed bedroom door, Hopper's somber face, and the mess of her home for the past year, and ran out the door.

She didn't know where she was running to- she just ran. She hadn't been so lost for a destination in a long time. She had spent her past year with her wayward family. She had spent a year in peace—a year without worrying. It was too good to be true, and she was being selfish. She would only put them both in danger, anyways. Hopper was right—in the end. Eleven needed to be protected. She could've gotten caught today. She hated to admit it, but damn. Hopper was right.

The wind brushed past her features, stinging her face as cold tears started to fly horizontally on her cheeks.

The pain of the glass embedded into her skin had started to numb. The pain in her heart was so much worse. It was so cliché, but she could feel her heart tear in two the second her foot lifted from that last porch step.

She hated herself. She would've saved herself a world of pain if she had never crawled to their help that cold winter day.

The rain had started to pick up, and minutes later; she was soaking wet from the impending storm. The thunder reminded her of Eleven, the time she taught her the trick with the lightning.

She weaved through trees, roaming the woodland floor like she so commonly knew them after spending months surrounded by them. Her breathing was restless and sporadic; despite not needing the oxygen. Her footsteps were an even cadence with the pitter-patter of the heavy rainfall. It drowned out the sounds of the usual nightly beasts, and all she could hear around her was dripping water and her boots squishing into fresh mud.

Despite her usually quick reflexes, her boot had caught on a root, and she was sent toppling to the floor.

She didn't care that she was cold, she didn't care that she was muddy. She didn't care that she was on the ground, or that it was the middle of the night.

She was lost—something she hadn't felt in a long time.

She gripped the woodland ground and screamed. She screamed, and screamed, and screamed, until there was no voice left within her.

A/N: Thanks for reading, all! Please let me know your thoughts, and feel free to give me a PM. Where do you think she will head on from here? I have an awesome plan as a way for her to tie in with the other characters, and you'll be meeting a favorite next chapter!

Mserrada: Thanks! I think lol

S: Thank you so much!

gamby004: Thank you so much! I love hearing feedback. As a matter of fact, I am! I don't want to stray to far from the story line though, as it is a stranger things fanfiction. But I will incorporate some more of Naomi's background.

Drop a review and I'll reply next chapter!

Thanks a ton!

10. Chapter 10: Downtown Hawkins

Apologies for the short chappy. Enjoy!

She didn't particularly like to steal, it was just necessary at times. She needed a new outfit, and besides, the store clerk was giving her googley eyes the second she stepped in. She managed to snag a pair of jeans and sneakers, and a patterned sweater. She dumped her dirty clothes in her backpack and made her way across the street to a general store called Melvald's.

The bells above her rang as she pushed her hands against the cold glass door.

"Hello!" A cheery voice from behind the counter rang.

She gave the woman standing by the cash register a refined nod, and moved to the back of the store. She found a pack of smokes among other things in a secluded isle and stuffed them in her front pouch, swinging the backpack over her shoulder.

She tightened the strap, pretending to browse the selection of candies while the store clerk walked down to her isle, stalking.

The woman had friendly eyes, but her lips twitched nervously. She reeked of anxiety, and her messily strewn hair proved it as well. She had recognized the woman's face before, and her mind flashed back to the day in the diner. She was drinking coffee and watched as the woman removed a poster with Will Byers' name on it.

"If you don't mind me asking, are you new in town?" The woman's voice shook her from her stupor. "I feel as if I've seen you before, but I'm not sure."

"Oh, um... just passing by." She shoved her hands into her jean pockets, rocking back on the balls of her feet.

She nodded, an 'ah' escaping her lips as she stocked the feminine products on a shelf a little too low for her height.

Did this mean that was Will Byers' mom? Joyce? Hopper had spoken about her before, how he took trips with them to the lab while they ran tests on Will. The way he spoke about Joyce made her spectacle about whether or not he was crushing on the girl he knew from middle school. HE hoped so. She was a very jumpy one, making quick jerking movements, but she seemed sweet— a good match for Hopper perhaps. Unfortunately, Hop had also mentioned that she was seeing someone.

"If you don't mind *me* asking," She challenged, "Are you a friend of Hop's?"

The woman's thin brows rose, her messy fringe starting to peek down to her eyelids. "Oh, uh. Well everyone knows Hopper. Yeah, but— yeah," She nervously twitched. "I guess I am."

She nodded.

She stood from her box of supplies, dusting her hands off on her green vest, and held a hand out. "I'm Joyce. Joyce Byers."

Naomi nodded, taking her hand and smiling back. "Elizabeth Green." Her cover-up name was different every time, and she couldn't trust anyone with FBI agents walking around demanding answers from innocent, fragile women like Joyce Byers. "My friends call me Beth, though. I was visiting Hopper from out of town, old friend of my mother's," She lied. When she took her hand, she felt the cold sensation that she had with Hopper. She was more controlled this time, and she could stop herself from taking the pain—but she couldn't help herself.

She saw the way Joyce nervously twitched, curling her thin hair between her fingers, or drummed her fingers fretfully against her leg. She could hear how fast her heart was racing only from talking to a stranger. She had heard the stories about Will being in the Upside Down, and Hopper had told her what it did to a woman who loved her son so much.

She kept shaking the woman's hand in greeting, and wrapped her other hand on her forearm.

Despite the thick sweater, Joyce still saw the black veins spiral and meander up Naomi's pale skin, and it made her freeze. She watched as the woman relaxed to her touch, but her heart was still trouncing in her chest from what had just happened.

She released the woman, saying nothing, and walked past her, giving her a polite smile as she exited the store.

When she glanced back in through the display window, she saw Joyce frozen with wide eyes, gawking as Naomi rounded the corner; exiting her sight.

It was nice to ease others' pain; made her feel less hollow inside.

She made her way to the library next, decided that when she did leave town, she'd like a few good books to read when crashing at aged motels (the one's that smelled of piss and had cigarette burns in the pillows).

She made her way to the horror section, as per usual, and browsed for the next hour or so.

The library was her happy place. Books made her forget the monster she was, for a moment at least. Maybe the reason she liked horror so much was because the fiend's in the book made her feel less monstrous.

She picked up a few, even started to read a couple on the nearby leather couch. She had gotten lost in Stephen King's Christine, when she allowed her eyes to flutter close.

She drifted into a light slumber, her consciousness ebbing away after a long night of running.

A few hours had passed by the time she had woken up, and she was glad to have gotten a few minutes of peace. She hated the fact that she had wasted the entire day, and she decided staying in Hawkins one more day wouldn't hurt.

She knew she was stalling, she couldn't deny that of herself, but she felt like her heart was being tugged at every time she even thought of leaving Hawkins.

Maybe she would stay.... Just for a little while. She didn't want to be invited back. She had a bad habit of holding a grudge- she could admit that. She just wanted to wait until things cooled down, see if Hopper really did take what Naomi and eleven said into account. Was Eleven mad at her? Or scared? She was so confused from their last encounter. Hopper had said 'They're hunting her for a reason' and the look Eleven shot her broke her damn heart.

She was scared... She would rather be shot down by a bunch of hunters then run from this town, leaving Hopper and Eleven behind.

She was so mad though!

She couldn't bear the thought of not seeing them again though, even if they didn't want her around.

She felt like she had a rationale finally— a purpose to stop running. It was a reason to finally stick around and do something, instead of hopping from place to place, stealing blood bags and money whilst crashing at dilapidated motels and sitting at bars or diners until the late hours of the morning.

And just as quickly as she had obtained that rationale, she lost it.

So here she was, reading her horror novels splayed out on the off-white sheets of a motel bed in the dimly-lit room just on the outskirts of Hawkins. She had snuck her way in, stealing the keys and writing her name down in the system. She was okay with crashing here, somehow—compared to the other grimey places she slept in over the country, she felt more at peace here, even considering the state of the room was almost identical to her previous bed-surfing.

She was **not** ready to leave yet

A day had passed—she was surprised to not see Hopper lingering around town. She did see one deputy, but she thought nothing of it. She wandered the town, curiously mapping out the place that she had resided in for the past year. She had been in town a few times, but not often; and only for quick errands.

It was a farm town, for the most part. Downtown Hawkins had a few

general stores, a few clothing stores, a small mall, a movie theatre, and two grocery shops. The rest of it was your regular suburban neighborhood with the lingering odor of cow manure

Taking on a new tactic, she tried to blend into the busiest parts of town, ensuring that the hunters would likely be looking for her on the outskirts. She was surprised, and scared, at the fact that they had still hung around this long to find her.

What made her so worth killing?

She knew the answer to that question, and she hated that she did.

Eventually, Jasper would come running back to her. She knew that. It was some sort of coven bond. She knew that they would use her to get to him—to kill one of the oldest, most powerful supernatural creatures in the entire underworld.

She decided to head to the hospital. She knew she shouldn't go there... but things had died down the past year. She'd stay hidden, she'd blend with others, and she'd hope to not get caught stealing blood bags.

She had finished two whole bags last night. Stress-eating was something she did often, and she decided to blame Hopper for that.

The scent of antibacterial cleaner hit her like a truck as she walked through the glass doors to the hospital. That, and the smell of blood. It had been a long time since she had set foot in a hospital, since Hop did it for her.

She tried to hold her breath as she walked past a gurney with a very healthy young patient on it, bleeding out as they waited to go into emergency. The scent was very overpowering for her, but she walked hastily and tried to act casual as she darted down halls; dodging patients and scrub-clad others.

She had emerged into the surgical wing, breaking the double locks and pushing through the twin doors. She followed the scent to a door that read 'Transfusions' and pushed the locked door open with her rigid shoulder.

Her stomach growled, and she surprised herself by how hungry she was. A bag a week usually did it for her—but again, she did stress eat. She was bored, too. She tossed a few bags into her grossly overfilled beige knapsack.

When she had grabbed a few different types, such as A-, B+, even O-, she zipped it close. The different types of blood tasted different for her, just as every single person's blood tasted different. It was like trying different flavors food. Some were savory, some sweet. Some more viscous, others more serous.

She fast-paced out the previously locked room and exited the surgery wing.

When she made her way to the bottom floor, she caught a familiar smell. She couldn't quite put a name to it, but she knew the scent. It was like seeing someone's face in public, and you had that familiarity wash over you like you knew them, but you couldn't remember how; or where.

She continued down the last hallway to the front of the building, and spun her head back to take one last glance; just in case she saw the face to the scent, or caught glimpse of the hunters.

Just as she was turning her head back around, ready to push open the doors, she slammed into a body that felt more like a brick wall than a human being.

A small 'oof' escaped her lips, and she raised her head to apologize to the man, until she saw his face.

James Winchester.

Behind him, his brother lurked; his attention locked onto something in his hands.

"Told you we'd find her," James gave a cheeky half smile, and she frowned.

This hospital was much too busy for them to do anything that involved fatality or a serious injury; with CCTV and visitors walking past them every five seconds.

She raised a boastful brow, stalling and taking the time she had in the open public to speak to the two men she hadn't seen in just under a year.

"Got nothing better to do then search for me? I mean, I gotta say I'm not all that interesting boys." She bit her lip, crossing her arms over her hands.

They were both fashioning black suits, a turtle neck underneath with grey and beige patterns.

"What the hell is so interesting about Hawkins Indiana?" Sebastian asked from behind James, raising a condescending brow in return.

She shrugged, "Nice people, good company. Frankly, I'm pretty sick of running from you two as well. I gotta say, you're two persistent sons of bitches."

"Tell you what," James replied, ignoring everything she had just said, "How about we give you a five second head start, hey? Just for some fun?"

She threw her head back, a maniacal chuckle escaping her ajar mouth. Today, they were going to be her bitch. She spoke the truth: She was sick of running. She didn't know if she could beat these two; but she knew she could put up one hell of a fight.

They shot her looks of mystification, and she grabbed James hand in that split second she had where they exchanged glances, and shook it. She shook it hard, damn hard. She gave him a bright beaming smile, pretending to be overjoyed, and crushed his fingers in between hers.

She heard the sickening snap of his pinky and his pointer finger. She watched as his face contorted, a small gasp escaping his lips as he realized what had just transpired. She smiled even wider than before, dimples pressing themselves deep within her cheeks. "How about a little longer, what do you say James?"

Her feet were quick to move after that, she scurried past the both of them, shoulder-checking Sebastian on the way out, and ran.

"HEY!" He heckled after.

"Just be thankful I did it at the hospital!" She yelled back, a hand cupping her mouth as the wind blew her hair around her fast.

She tightened the straps of her backpack around her as she ran. She hated running at a human-speed, but luckily the town was buzzing with enough activity that nobody questioned it too much.

She could hear them running, James letting out small whining noises and whimpers every so often. She lost them for a moment after watching them get caught at a red light at a busy intersection, but they caught up to her when she was encircled by a group of church singers that wouldn't move off of the sidewalk no matter how much she pushed. She eventually got through them, stopping oncoming traffic as she merged onto the road. The commotion and the loss of time allowed them to gain a few seconds on her.

She had to hide; she had to drive them away somehow. She needed somewhere to veil herself from them, and darting into a grocery store with a wall of transparent windows wasn't going to work.

She groaned, running a hand through her curly hair as her feet plodded against cracked pavement. The clicking of their dress shoes wasn't far rear.

She rounded a corner, and saw her escape.

Instead of somewhere, maybe she just needed someone.

She saw an older teen exit the florist with a bouquet of flowers in hand, and ran straight towards him. He was fiddling with change, and perked up when he heard the light thumps of her black sneakers.

He was an attractive gentleman with his hair in messy waves and a casual style to him.

She slowed herself a little too late, almost running into him.

"Hey!" She panted, placing a hand beside him on the brick wall, cornering him against her and the barricade. She heaved breaths of air, and watched as the teen with wild hair shot her an odd and flustered look.

"Um—"

"What's your name?" She wheezed, cutting him off as she closed the gap between them. Her eyes anxiously scrutinized the corner of the building, a few yards from where they were. She could hear them nearing, and her face whipped back to focus on the boy.

"I-Uh—" he stammering, fiddling with the plastic wrap of the flowers as he spoke. "It's... umm. It's Ste—"

She cut him off with her lips, pressing them firmly to his and grabbing the back of his neck with her free hand. She cupped the back of his head, pulling him closer. She could hear the two hunters pass by her, cursing as she made out with the cute younger by between her lips. She decided to relish in the moment a little bit longer, considering he wasn't resisting, and locked her lips tighter to his.

He kissed back after a few seconds of being stunned. They let out small squeaks when their lips parted and re-clasped. His lips molded with hers, and she surprisingly enjoyed the encounter, but she wasn't here to make out. She was here to hide until she could see Eleven again.

She backed up from the wall, wiping her lips with the back off her hand as she unlatched from him.

He stared at her bug-eyed, flowers now dropped on the floor from the previous state of affairs. His lips were parted, breathing light but hasty breath's as he cocked a brow. He blushed a dark pink and pushed his volumized hair back with one hand.

He looked practically limp, besides having his back pressed against the bricks to keep him vertical. He also appeared extremely confused... but extremely overjoyed as well.

"Thanks!" She dismissed cheerily, giving him a light pat on the cheek as she fast-walked in the other direction.

"WOAH, woah... woah. Wait!" He sprinted after her, crushed flowers in hand. "Who are you!? And what the—the hell! Just happened?"

She threw up a peace sign, not bothering to turn around, and darted around the corner. She slowed to a steady walk, praying that the coast was clear, and decided to head back to the library to hide out for a while.

She assumed the boy had left, but he was persistent in figuring out her identity. He grabbed her wrist, stopping her in her tracks, and she frowned. Normally she'd kick someone's ass if they put their hands on her, but he was particularly adorable compared to most men (plus she had just made out with him without his sanction).

"Are you serious?" He hissed, his brows rising. "You just smacked your lips against mine, and you're all cranky because I grabbed your wrist?"

She shrugged, "Yeah, touché Elvis." She nodded towards his perfectly styled hair.

He grumbled at that, and groaned even more as she pivoted away from him.

He trotted up to her, attempting to keep up with her high-paced stride. "What the hell just—"

"You're cute, I'm cute, what's the problem Farah?" She gave him a questionable look, trying to slow down as she walked. He would make a good camouflage from the Winchester's.

"Stop calling me that," His brows fell, "You better hope nobody saw that."

"What?" She questioned, "Us makin' out?" She teased as she raised her eyebrows up and down repeatedly, "Because you seemed to enjoy it lover boy."

His eyes grew wide as his chiseled jawline compressed, and he stopped her with the bouquet. She paused, snorting at the gesture, and waited for him to speak.

"I...." He closed his mouth again, not bothering to disagree. The boy smelt like cheap cologne and under that she sniffed out a bit of sweetness; like candy. He smelt mouth-watering. Almost better than

the blood bag's in her backpack, which she clutched tighter as she stood next to the naive human.

"Perhaps your hesitation has something to do with the roses in your hand?" She asked, pert smirk on her face as she pushed past him, continuing their walk.

"Yeah—Nancy's never gonna freakin' want me back if she hears that some girl was all over me at the front of Hawkins' florist.

She rolled her eyes at the mention of his large ego, although she was kind of all over him.

"So you're saying you didn't enjoy it?" She teased, walking ahead of him with wide steps.

"No!" He answered a little too hastily, "No. It was good. Great. In fact, really great. But—"

"Mhm," She shrugged him off, jay walking across the street. To her revelation, he trailed after her.

"Wait! Stop, wait," His hands lightly brushed her shoulder. "God, stop walking so fast. What's your name?"

She exhaled deeply, letting her cheeks fill with her then sputter out. "Elizabeth Green." She had that feeling of comfort, the one she felt when she met Hopper and Eleven. She didn't quite trust him enough to tell him her real name, though. She settled for the most innocent alias she had previously used with Mrs. Byers.

He spun her around, causing her to stop her quest to wherever she was going, and held his free hand. "Steve Harrington."

She gave him a polite smile, and took his hand, shaking it.

"Pleasure to meet you," She made a face, "and your lips."

"Yeah, ditto. Whatever." He shook his head, waves of golden locks cascading around his face. "Are you new?"

She let out a soft chortle of amusement. "Is this town really that

small?"

He shot her an incredulous look, shifting his weight as he waited for her response.

She sighed, "Friend of Jim Hopper, heard of him?"

His head darted forward, both brows raising, "Chief Jim Hopper? How do you know Hopper?"

She shrugged, "Friend of my mom's from a while back." She crossed her arms over her chest. "That's not important, though. Your girl, Nadine—"

"Nancy," he corrected, "Nancy Wheeler."

She almost choked.

"What? What is it? What did I say?" red rushed to his face again as his stance widened.

Information started gyrating threw her mind, ideas and plans. Maybe she could talk to Hop... work things out. She could get to him somehow through the Harrington kid. She would see the Wheeler's, find her way to Mike, who would get to Will, and from there it would be easy. She didn't want to just show up at the cabin again.

She just longed to see the both of them, and it had only been two freaking days!

"Nothing," She shook her head, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear "Hey, how's about we go for a quick coffee? I could use a friend in this town." She gave him a polite grin, "Tell me a bit more about your Nancy. I'm not trying to toot my own horn; but I've had my fair share of relationships, maybe I can give advice where due."

He shot her an odd look, trying to hide his smile. He exhaled quickly through his nostrils, and allowed the smile to grow. His heart stuttered a few beats, and she could sense the chemo signals of attraction radiating off of him. She was toying with them a little, which she felt a tad guilty for, but nothing worth beating herself up for.

To be honest, she could use another friend in this town.

His face softened, and he nodded towards the diner a few blocks up.
"Yeah, come on, what the hell."

A/N: This ain't gonna be no love story, I just think a bit of innocent flirting is fun. Maybe in the sequel, when ST3 comes out. Please read and review! They really push me to write, although I love writing none the less.

lyona5: Thank you so much! Binge reading a story is the best. I'll try to get new chapters out asap. That's exactly what I was going for, by the way.

Gamby004: This review made me so happy! Thank you for your continuous reviews.

Lady Jensen: Okay I definitely considered making her older to do something like this... But I decided to make her younger because I love Jopper way too much.

11. Chapter 11: Be safe, I love you

Since ya'll are so obsessed with the Steve and Naomi pairing, here you go. No promises on making them a couple, but I do like their interaction and if i do decide for them to be together, it will be a side thing, not the main plot of this fanfiction! Let me know your thoughts.

I do not own Stranger Things, Supernatural, or Netflix.

P.S. Does anyone wanna make me a sick cover photo? I'll love you forever and credit you in my bio and the story!

They sat at the booth inside Mel's diner, a vintage restaurant with bright red booths and a waitress that skated around on rollerblades. It was the same as the one she planted her butt in only a year ago, sipping a stale coffee as a Winchester shoved a knife through her heart. She touched the cracked faux-leather as if it was some prized possession, reminded her of the night she locked herself into a year-long deal.

To the seemingly innocent, they looked like a new couple; Steve sitting across from 'Beth', his hands folded as he eagerly leered in to whatever ramble she was going off on. He was genuinely listening to her, and it was something that made Naomi happy.

There was a milkshake between them, complimentary of the waitress, but only Steve drank it.

If you were to really divulge into their discussion you'd know that Naomi was giving Steve advice on how to win the girl. She laid back, her arm a top the red booth, and she smiled cheekily. Steve had told her about the night at the party, Nancy claiming everything was 'bullshit'. She hated to judge others without meeting them, but Steve seemed sweet. Then again, she had only just met Steve.

"I just—I don't know. Jonathon walks into the picture a year ago... I had broken his camera, it was terrible. I know. We bought him a new one after... some things happened."

She could hear his heartbeat stutter, and her eyes flew to his chest, specifically the upper left, as her brows flicked downwards ever so minimally.

He exhaled. "Maybe I'm just not meant for her, you know?" He shrugged, "Maybe she's meant for me—and I'm not meant for her." The disappointment in his voice was concrete. "Which sucks," His head fell into his hands, and Naomi actually felt bad for the dude.

"Didn't you say you were going to college next year? You'll meet lots of girls." She gave him a hopeful grin, removing her arm from the back of the booth and leaving forward, her arms folded together on the table.

He shook his head in his hands, lifting his flustered face up, "I said I'm graduating this year. I had a whole plan, stick around a little longer till she's done and we can go somewhere together for school."

She knew what that felt like; heart break. She was familiar with it. Maybe not in the same sense he was right now, but she felt much the same as Steve Harrington right now. She hated feeling like she had just been knocked off a cliff, and was falling and falling and falling, but she never hit rock bottom. The feeling in her chest was like when you were asleep, and you were sailing towards the ground, but instead of shooting awake and feeling your heart flutter in your chest, she was in that constant state of pre-impact.

"Do not go gentle into that good night."

"What?" he perked up, confusion spreading like a wildfire.

She gave him a sort of half-quirk of the lips. "Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light. **Do not go gentle into that good night.**"

"I don't get it," He bit his lip. "Isn't that supposed to be a euphemism for death? You saying I should just give up?"

She shook her head, her brown curls cascading like waves around her face. "No! No that's not what I'm saying," She swallowed, "I think it's an invocation for us to live boldly, freely. It implores us to not give

up, to get the girl in this situation."

His face scrunched up as he grimaced. "I'll have you know, I don't like when people are right. Surprisingly, you give good advice."

She shrugged, "No biggie, S."

"Did you just give me a nickname?"

"Sure did," She nodded casually.

"I just met you..." He let out a soft chuckle, his shoulders moving with his chortles.

She gave him a pompous beam. "*Live boldly*," she quoted herself.

He just rolled his eyes, leaning back in the booth. "Whereabouts are you from then?"

"North Carolina," She responded, not technically lying. She was born there, but that wasn't where she had spent most of her life. Most of her life was spent on the move following her mom's numerous job upgrades. "Charlotte, North Carolina."

He nodded, sipping the vanilla from the bottom of the glass through a red straw, "I've heard of it." He let out a satisfied noise as he slurped up the last of its content. "So are you graduated then? Or home schooled? Rebellious?"

"I seem like the type to rebel?" She raised her brows.

He made a face. "Most definitely."

She shrugged it off, "I'm sort of on my own, I guess. Graduated a while back. Just sort of motel surfing until I find a place more permanent. Hawkins seems nice."

"This night isn't gonna end with you chopping my body to pieces and stowing them in the 3/4th filled dumpster in the alley, is it?"

She wiggled her eyebrows, "Depends how the night goes."

He chuckled. "So how old are you?"

"21," Again, not a lie. Her body was frozen at 21, while she was really 24; almost 25.

"Grandma," he snorted.

She rolled her eyes at that comment.

The waitress retrieved the empty milkshake from between them, leaning over Naomi dangerously, exposing a little too much beating, lively skin for her liking; making the glands underneath her jaw tingle with excitement.

"So I thought you were visiting Chief Jim Hopper?" His name sounded so formal coming from Steve's mouth, making her want to laugh as Jim was the most informal person she knew. "For your mom; or something."

"Yeah," She nodded, eyes darting away as she played with her clean fork. "Saw him already. Was pretty caught up with work though, something about a bird attacking some lady's hair because it thought it was a nest."

He didn't laugh at that, just pushed her for more info. "How long will you be here for then?"

She struggled to answer that question. It depended on her relationship with El and Hopper... depended on the Winchester's.

"I mean, you seem like a pretty rad person, could probably meet up before you leave again. Stay in touch or something, you know?" He gave her a crooked smile.

"Why?" She raised her brows, 'ncase' Nancy Wheeler doesn't work out?"

"N-No!" He stammered, "No. Just don't have that many good friends in a town like this, not anymore. None worth keeping around, anyways." She didn't push for the hidden message behind his words, her mind was still stuck on the word 'friend'. She didn't often make friends. She moved so quickly, that by the time they had even gotten

her name, she moved to the next city.

"That's sweet, S, but I don't think I'll be in Hawkins for much longer." He mind flashed back to Hopper.

"Just go..."

"That seems like a personal decision," He deduced.

"Yeah," She gave a harsh laugh, "Trying to rid myself from creeps like you."

"You asked me to go for coffee..."

"Stop being right, please," She shot him an annoyed glance, "It's exceptionally annoying. Deflating my ego."

"That's me, Steve Harrington, Deflater of Ego's" he titled himself with a hearty laugh.

"Should put that on your resume," She suggested with a coy wink.

The waitress came back with a whopping bill for one shake, and she realized then that their time together was cut short; and she didn't want it to be. She enjoyed his company, in a friendly way. Sure he was cute, maybe a little below average when it came to IQ, but he had a good heart and a caring quality about him that she admired.

The jingle of the bells from the door opening chorused in her ears, and she froze. She saw the two men with suits parading in, taking a seat at the bar. She had run into them, not only twice in one day, but twice at the same place, now! She had the strange sense of déjà vu, or was that the twinge of pain she felt where they had repeatedly stabbed her only a year ago?

She sunk down in the booth, her pants squeaking against the broken fabric of the chair. She tried to inconspicuously hide herself from both the hunters, and the Harrington boy's confused stares.

"What are you—"

"How about we got out here, yah?" She whisper-shouted, making him

only more perplexed. "I should get to bed anyways, I'm pretty tired. You have a car, right? Can you take me to the nearest Inn?"

"How would you know if I have a car?" He asked, his hands folding together.

She frowned at him, darting left in the booth in attempt to shield herself from James as he walked past them to the washroom. His arm was placed in a sling, making his formal attire almost comical.

"Yeesh, no need to give me the death glare. I do. It's parked by the florist still, though." He held up his flowers that were starting to wither from the over-heated restaurant. "As long as you don't mind walking."

"I don't! Let's go," She urged eagerly, tugging at his arm as she hopped out of the booth. She pulled him vertically, and he tried to shrug her off.

"Wait, God, wait!" He shoved his hands in his jacket pocket, frowning at her as he pulled out a five and placed it on the table. "Okay, come on." He trailed after her as she eagerly paced towards the door, giving him uncomfortable looks as they paced the bar stool with Seb sitting in it. "Chill, Beth. It's not like this place closes, it's 24 hours—"

"Naomi," She documented the gruff voice, and she shivered when she saw his angry face glaring at her as she towed a patient Steve.

Steve frowned, eyes darting from the two. "Naomi..." he paused "Is that—"

"Middle name! Let's go." She booked it from the reteraunt, grabbing Steve's hand and pulling him along the sidewalk. He tried to resist with stiff feet, but he still followed.

"What's going on? Who was that?" He started to pant, his free hand wiping his forehead. "Oh God, leave it to me to make friends with a damn convict!"

She pulled him into a side alley, yanking his arm into the darkness of a silent streat that smelt like booze and rotting garbage. "Hey! Do I look like a convict to you?"

He scoffed, "Does anybody?!"

"Steve," She assured with stern, confident eyes; locking hers with his. "It's one of my mom's high school buddies, he's kind of a creep," she lied assertively. "That's all, okay? Just makes me uncomfortable." She still hung to his clammy hands, and Steve took note of that, but didn't detest.

"I know you're lying."

She grunted, scuffing the pavement with her boots. "Will you just trust me if I say that he's not a good man? That he does make me uncomfortable?"

He bit his tongue, lips pursing together. "I have no reason to trust you really." He hissed in a breath. "But, live boldly, I guess." This time, he yanked her hand. "Come on, let's go. You're not staying in an Inn. Save some money and sleep in my guest bedroom."

She had almost missed what he said as bee-lined for his car across the street. "Steve—"

"No," he murmured to himself, "I'm not crazy at all... inviting some random girl I have just met inside my house."

"Steve—"

"Especially with Nancy being as mad as she is..."

"Steve!"

"What?!" He gyrated to face her, unlocking the passenger door with his key.

"What about your parents? Brothers, sisters?"

"They're on a business trip right now." He replied, opening the door for her but not bothering to close it. He unlocked his door, standing with one foot in the vehicle and one still on the pavement as he watched the two FBI agents sprint around the corner. She could see the internal dilemma in his bright eyes as he watched them clamor around looking for her, pointing and yelling at each other.

He curled his lips over his teeth, exhaling through flared nostrils, and closed the car door, igniting the engine with a twist of his keys.

She breathed a sigh of relief, smiling at Steve who gave her a weak smile back.

Steve was three beers in, chatting some more about Nancy as Naomi dangled her feet over the edge of his hot tub, her butt planted on the wet pavement with the strong scent of chlorine filling her nostrils. She had a lit cigarette between her lips, relaxing as she listened to Steve's voice.

"I mean, she's just perfect, you know? You ever find someone and you realize you're so irrevocably devoted to them that your heart literally hurts?" His words slurred, and his feet splashed up onto his rolled up jeans as his legs kicked small waves across from her. "I just feel so weak when I'm with her. My palms get all sweaty, and I'm constantly touching my hair. It seems so easy for her, so innocent." He glanced up at her once she realized he hadn't replied in a while, and she gave him a pert smile. "H-Have you ever been in love, Elizabeth?"

She breathed out a large breath, filling her cheeks up with air before releasing it like a deflating balloon. "That's a question." She had been in love before. It seemed like a lifetime ago, to her.

"Have you ever had your heart broken?"

Again, she had. In so many different senses though; her father abandoning them, her mother leaving her on this earth, her brother bargaining her life to a vampire; Hopper telling her to leave. She had experienced a broken heart many times, and she was currently suffering through one right now.

"I'm going to take that as a yes," he snapped his fingers, pointing a 'finger gun' in her direction. His verbal filter had completely eradicated itself as he continued to speak, crossing personal boundaries with her that she wasn't sure whether she wanted to divulge into. "What'd ya feel like?"

She licked her lips, as her eyes drifted to the bubbly water below her.

She watched as her toes made ripples in the liquid, spreading from the epicenter like an earthquake until they disappeared at the edge of the hot tub. "Like shit." She bluntly replied. "I mean, it's so much worse than just explaining it, you know?"

She bit her lip, "It's like you can physically feel it; the pain. You're paralyzed. Constant headache; burning eyes, nausea." That was how she felt walking away from the only two people she had ever cared about since becoming one of the supernatural. "It's a lot like drowning," She shut her eyes, thinking about her mutilating demise. "You struggle to hold your breath, but faltering from inhaling a lungful of water as you panic. It's painful, and hard, and all you want to do is reprieve. You hub to the burning of oxygen deprivation, your head feels like it's about to explode—and you get sink down further. I think the worst part about drowning, is that the saving can only be accomplished by someone else. Finally, voluntary apnea kicks in, you inhale and you're at peace with it. All you can think about is the surface."

He was quiet for a long moment, and his response almost seemed comical from his buzzed-state. "Wow."

They said nothing.

She pressed her cigarette into the wet concrete, tossing it a few meters away.

He twirled his feet around in the warm water, hands by his side. She could feel his eyes on him, but she didn't look up. She gnawed on the skin at her plump lips, her mind drifting.

"Are you my surface?" The question surprised her. Steve looked at her with positive eyes, a genuinely curious face that grew with each passing second of silence.

She had never regarded herself in such a positive light; she wouldn't give herself the benefit of being Steve's Surface. She didn't deserve to. Steve needed a better friend then her around. She wouldn't hang around town much longer... despite her yearning to see Eleven and Hopper. She was so back and forth about her decision; but she had decided now. It was for the best.

She stood from the hot tub, her wet feet dripping on the untouched concrete as she moved to Steve's side, offering him her hand. "No. Sorry, S."

He took her hand reluctantly, and they made their way inside.

They had started to watch a cheesy horror movie on the couch, Steve on the love seat while she spread out on the 3-seater. They had talked for a few hours, but at some point in the movie, a buzzed Steve succumbed to his fatigue, and a light snore escaped his lips. She debated moving him to his bed, knowing he'd hurt his back in that position on the couch; but the risk was too great of him waking up and discovering her vigor.

She remained awake for a while, long after she turned off the Michael Myers movie. She stared at the ceiling, making intricate patterns with her mind as she stared at the knots of wood on the ceiling. They eerily resembled eyes.

She sighed as she rested her hands behind her head.

She couldn't stay here much longer, she had to leave. Hopper had said what he meant. Go. El and him would be safer without her, she never belonged there anyways; despite feeling so whole with them. How much longer did she think she could stay?

She thought back to the letter she had written messily on the paper towel to Eleven, her photographic memory kicking in.

Eleven,

I'm sorry for leaving like this. I'm sorry for everything. I'm so thankful to have experienced your first year with you. I'm thankful to have heard about Mike and your friends. I'm thankful to have set off fireworks with you on July 4th, teach you English and History. I was excited to watch you eat Eggo's, watch Days of Our lives, teach you how to braid. I hope one day to find the same love for someone as you have for Mike. Don't be mad at Hop, he doesn't understand. He loves you, just as I do. He wants you safe. It's a different love, though.

I will see you again, I promise. I can't stay any longer though.

Bad med are hunting me.

I have done some unforgivable things, and I think a lot of that had been shielded from you with my time spent here. Hopper is right. I can be a monster. I would never hurt either of you, but I don't get to call the shots anymore, they're not my responsibility to do so.

I was so scared of seeing you who I truly was; afraid you wouldn't accept me anymore.

I had a brother once before, a twin. A twin is someone who's born at the same time as you. We were the same age. We were very close, and I lost him, he had hurt me. Just as you are, and just as Hopper is, I think we are all broken. This past year had revealed a lot. We relied on each other more than we should have.

I'm sorry if this letter doesn't make sense.

Thank you for teaching me what being whole felt like, Eleven.

*I will see you again. It may not be for a long time. You may not want to see me either... but I promise. In return, **promise** me you will do one thing.*

Be safe.

I love you,

Naomi.

She smiled to herself, imagine Eleven reading the letter. Would she be mad, or happy? Maybe both. There were a lot of words she'd need help explaining, but there were no other words Naomi could have used at the time, and there wasn't a lot of room to explain on a piece of paper towel.

She sighed to herself.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

"Okay," she patted Steve on the back, leaning over at him on the

passenger seat. "Listen to me,"

"Yep," he nodded, licking his bottom lip nervously as he ran a thumbnail a long it.

"You're gonna go in there,"

"Uh-huh—"

"You're gonna tell her everything you told me—"

"Yes,"

"And you're gonna win her over. Okay? You'll have her heart swooning for you just like I did last night, S." She teased with a jovial laugh.

He rolled his eyes, snatching the flowers from her hands as he exited the vehicle. They had accidentally elapsed the previous bouquet at the diner, so after breakfast they ran out quickly to buy some more. Steve had commented on her lack of eating the past three meals they ate together, but she blamed it on a small stomach.

She exited the vehicle, shutting the creaky door as she rested on the rusted metal, talking to him as he wandered around the side.

"Just tell her how you really feel, Harrington, can't hurt. She's either gonna love you for, it or she's crazy not to."

He gave her a hopeful grin as he shot her a thumbs up. He started for her walkway, up to the Wheeler house, but paused before he made it to the path. "I'm gonna see you later, right?"

She nodded slowly, blatantly lying to the boy. "I'll be around."

"Do you want to meet tomorrow for breakfast or something?"

She nodded again. "Sure thing, S."

"Promise?"

She gritted her teeth together as she struggle to spit out the pledge

back. "Promise. Now go get your girl."

He shot her a wide grin. "Awesome. I'll tell you all how it went. Sure you're okay from here?"

"Oh ya," She waved him off. "Mom grew up around here," She lied for the zillionth time, "I know some old friends down the street, I'll try to crash there for the night and meet you in the morning."

"Okay, well..." He rocked back and forth on his heels, crackling the plastic wrap in his hand. "See you around—I suppose."

"Later Harrington." She gave him a small wave and started in the other direction.

"Steve!" That voice didn't come from that of a women, nor did it escape from Steve himself. She had barely made it ten steps before she was turned back around by another voice. "Are those for Mr. or Mrs. Wheeler?"

She watched the confrontation, as a familiar curly headed boy approached Steve. He glanced at the flowers, then back to Dustin. "No—"

"Good." The pre-teen snatched them from his hands and started to walk towards the car.

"Hey! What the hell? Hey!" He detested, following a fast Dustin to his vehicle.

"Nancy isn't home," he panted, readjusted his patriotic-colored cap on his head.

"Where is she?"

"Doesn't matter," he answered coldly. "We have bigger problems then your love life." He dismissed, opening the passenger door. "Do you still have that bat?"

"Bat?" He shook his car keys, "What bat?"

"The one with the nails?"

"Why?" he retorted with a frown.

"I'll explain it on the way."

She watched with eager eyes as Dustin shut the door, and Steve ran to the car. She couldn't help but let her mind drift towards the possibility of Steve being involved in all of this. If he was acquaintances with Dustin, he probably knew about the Upside Down... especially considering he had equipped a bat with nails.

She sprinted over to the driver side window, knocking on it frantically just as Steve was about to drive off. He frowned at her, rolling down the window manually as he shot her an odd look. "What? What is it?"

"I'm coming with you," She released a labored breath as she looked down at Steve.

He sighed, his hands batting against the steering wheel. "I suppose you're not giving me a choice, are you?"

"Nope," She accentuated the 'p' popping it with her lips. She opened the backseat door and took a spot behind Steve.

Dustin said nothing at first, just stared at her as Steve pulled away from the side of the curb; the only sound being the rough engine of the car.

"What's that on your head?" She asked, pointing to the microphone set with a tall antenna atop Dustin's head. A cord trailed from the earpiece to his pocket.

He scrunched his eyes together, scrutinizing her. "I know you from somewhere."

"I have one of those faces," She dismissed, "Everyone feels like they know me."

He shook his head, "No, I definitely know you." He sat back in his chair. "Anyways, she can't be in here Steve. Top secret stuff—if you know what I mean." They shared a look, and Steve nodded. That confirmed for her that Steve definitely knew about the Lab's mishaps

in this town.

"What? I can't know about the monster?" She asked, lying smugly back in her seat with folded arms. "Or the Upside Down? Eleven?" She wasn't sure if she should've said the last part, but it was too late now.

They both shot her vexed looks, Steve through the rearview mirror, and Dustin with his whole body rotated towards her.

"What?! H-How... What?" Steve stammered.

"We signed contracts saying we weren't supposed to disclose anything, Steve!" Dustin smacked the back of his head, and he hissed, rubbing the area with one hand.

"I didn't say anything!" He abominated, "I just met her yesterday!"

"S'true," She replied, shifting in her seat as she put her hands around Steve's chair. "He didn't say anything. Will you believe me if I just say I'm very observant?"

"No!" Dustin yelled, his lips forming into a large O. "Not now! Who told you? Do you know Lucas? I bet it was Lucas."

"She's friends with Hopper!" Steve guessed. "Where am I going, by the way?"

"My house," he answered, pointing out the window, "Next right"

He made a sharp right, and they sailed down another suburban street lined with picket-fenced houses and signs of the upcoming election's politicians staked into their grass.

"Fine. Hopper told me then."

"God dammit," Dustin seized. "You think as the chief he'd keep his damn mouth shut."

"Okay," Naomi edged towards the perimeter of her seat; one hand on each seat. "So what's the story, Morning Glory?"

"I asked for *Steve*," he glared, "Not you."

"Well, you're stuck with me." She elucidated. "Elizabeth Green, pleasure to meet you. Now go on," She rushed.

He groaned at her, hand gripping his thighs as he realized there was no other choice if he was going to achieve Steve's help. "It's a long story..." He grumpily replied. "The short version of it is that somehow a baby Demogorgon showed up in my garbage can and now it's molting and getting bigger so I trapped it in my basement cellar." He raised his eyebrows, "Oh, and it ate Mews."

"Who's Mews?" She questioned.

"My cat."

"WHAT the SHIT!" Steve screamed, white knuckles gripping the steering wheel while he took another directed bearing. "Holy crap... What?! How?!"

"It showed up Halloween. He kept getting bigger and bigger though... He ate 3 musketeers before, but now he's craving... larger stuff."

"Okay, where did you trap him?" She asked, gesticulating to the both of them to calm down.

"In my cellar," He spoke with a slight lisp, which Naomi couldn't help but point out as adorable. She pushed the thought back, though; allowing them to continue the converse.

"How'd you get him there?"

"I fed him raw meat."

"So this thing's attracted to blood?"

"Yes," He seethed angrily. "Hopper not tell you that?"

She ignored his remark and turned to Steve. "Hey, S. You okay bud?"

With eyes as wide as saucers, he spaced out on the open road. The sun was starting to plunge below the horizon, and their surroundings

got dimmer and dimmer. "Fine," he spat out, "Just you know... NOT wanting to almost die again! Are you sure it wasn't just a reptile or something that escaped?"

"Steve," he shook his head leisurely. "It was this big," he gestured with his hands about two feet wide, "And it didn't start out that big." His hands shrunk to a few inches.

Steve relaxed into his chair, shaking his head, "I swear to god man, it's gonna be just some lizard, okay?"

"It's not a lizard!"

"How do you know?"

"How do I know if it's not a lizard?" He retorted back, annoyed by Steve's question.

"Yeah! How do you know if it's not just a lizard!?" He replied heatedly.

Dustin's face fell. "Because his face opened up and he ate my cat." He pointed to the right, and Steve followed his directions, shrugging as his head cocked to the side in defeat.

Naomi fell back into her seat again. She wasn't sure whether she enjoyed it or despised it, but either way it appeared as if she wasn't getting out of this town like she had planned. "God dammit."

They stood in front of the cellar, Steve with his spiked bat in one hand and flashlight in the other. It was locked with a padlock, and Steve stood protectively in front of the two as he beamed his flashlight at it. That made her snort, considering she could flip the two in an instant if she desired to.

She could smell the monster from outside. Her nose scrunched up as she tried to shield the scent. It smelt like... death. Like decay and rot. The putrid smell scorched the tender skin on the inside of her nose, and she almost gagged.

An owl hooted in the distance, and all they could hear after that was

the nightly conundrum of the nightly beasts waking from their nocturnal slumber.

Steve leaned towards the aged cellar, and shook his head. "I don't hear shit."

"He's in there," Dustin assured, watching Steve.

It was true, though. Naomi heard nothing either.

Steve apprehensively tapped the bat against the cellar doors. They waited for a few seconds with held breaths and beating hearts, but nothing sounded within.

"Sure he didn't get out?" Naomi questioned.

"I'm sure," He shot her a discerning look.

Steve pressed his tongue to the inside of his left cheek, and tried again; this time harder. Dustin jumped slightly in her peripheral; and they both took a cautious step back as Naomi remained. Steve sighed, turning to Dustin and shining the flashlight directly in his face. "Alright; listen, kid. I swear if this is some sort of Halloween prank—you're dead."

Dustin shut his eyes tightly to protect them from the light, shaking his head. "It's not."

"All right?"

"It's not a prank! Get it out of my face."

Naomi knocked Steve's hand down, moving closer to the cellar before peering over it. "I don't think he's lying, Steve."

"Thank you!"

"What makes you say that?" He asked accusingly, shining the light at her back now. Her knees cracked as she bent down in the bed, cupping her ear as she leered towards the tilted cellar. When she didn't reply after a moment or two, he turned back to Dustin. "You got a key for this thing?"

With no time to waste, she ripped open the lock, crushing it between her hands before tossing it aside and pulling apart the intertwined chains.

"WOAH." Dustin went bug-eyed, and Steve said nothing, shaking his head in disbelief.

"I don't wanna know..." He huffed, moving past her to open the doors. He gave Dustin the flashlight, who shined it down, and Steve opened the left door first. It creaked up with loud resonance. Once the coast was clear post-opening; he lifted the second one up and waited.

They all listened.

"He must be further down there," Dustin suggested after a few hushed seconds. "I'll stay here... in case he tries to," he paused, searching for a word, "...escape."

Steve looked up at him in incredulity, but Dustin did nothing. He shook his head, eyes rolling as he turned back to the cellar, staring at it menacingly. Steve swallowed hard; preparing himself to start down the cellar.

Naomi rolled her eyes at their stalling, knowing she was mostly indestructible, and started down the cellar. She crouched for the first few steps, ignoring Steve's whisper-shouts as she diminished the last of his masculinity.

Her sneakers tapped lightly onto the concrete as her crouch transformed into a stance, and she took her time, scanning the room with her night vision. She trusted her sense of smell and hearing, but sight was always reassurance for her.

She glanced back at Steve, who was seemingly following her now. She could see the whites of his eyes glance around the cramped room as he made his way beside her. She located a few non-perishables along a dusty shelf, but that was the only present thing in the room, besides the two of them and a few palettes of wood.

With the help of his flashlight, they located the pull-cord illumination

and the light bulb buzzed on with a silent hum.

She let out a small gasp as she watched Steve poke a slimy substance with the head of his bat. She almost gag as he lifted up what was left of the molted skin, watching the substance slither down his bat and drip to the floor like mucous.

The smell was even worse down here, making her hold her breath. She turned to the corner of the cellar, glancing at a small hole created in the corner of the crypt, a self-dug tunnel leading into darkness.

"Uh Steve..." Steve pointed his flashlight towards her, and his face fell as he looked at the tunnel the escaping monster had created after his kidnapping.

She could hear Dustin's footsteps approach behind the two of them that stared dumbfounded at the fissure.

"Oh shit."

Thanks for reading!

DeusTenebris: Thank you for pointing that out! I tried to go back and change all their names as I made it Sam and Dean first, but I decided I wanted them to be assholes ans I actually love Sam and Dean in real life. I'll go back and check it!

3CHOES: Thanks for your reviews always! If i get enough reviews I might make it more canon, seeing as a lot of people like it!

gamby004: I was hoping it would tie up nicely! Thanks for your review

12. Chapter 12: Goonies

As always, I don't own Stranger Things, Netflix, or Supernatural.

See you at the bottom.

"I don't really get it," Naomi shrugged as she walked along the train tracks, her feet scuffing the earthed floor between the tracks. She reached into her bucket, dropping a piece of raw beef on the ground and throwing it to the floor, hearing it land with a small squelch. "What's a girl see in an interdimensional smiley slug anyway?" She glanced at Steve beside her, and they shared a look, following Dustin's lead ahead of them.

"Are you kidding me?" He asked rhetorically, "It's awesome. It's impressive."

"I don't know man, I feel like you're just trying way to hard considering you just met the girl." Steve added, dropping a cube of raw meat at his feet as he spoke.

"What's her name?" Naomi asked

"Max." He answered in annoyed town, "And not everyone can have your perfect hair, alright?"

Naomi smirked as she bumped Steve's shoulder with hers, reaching in the bucket again. "Thanks, Dustin, didn't realize you admired my hair so much," She joked.

"Shut up," he growled, shooting her back a glare.

"Yeesh," She commented as Steve continued.

"It's not about the hair, man. The key with girls is just," he shrugged, "Acting like you don't care."

Dustin slowed to walk beside them, glancing over at Steve. "Even if you do?"

"Yeah. Exactly. It drives em' nuts."

"Then what?"

"Then you just.. wait," Steve tossed a dice over his shoulder. "Until, uh... until you feel it," He tapped Dustin's shoulder with his yellow dishwashing gloves and sent him a quirky smile.

Naomi snorted, "No." She shook her head, glancing down at her almost empty bucket of meat. "That is not what you do, Dustin." She cocked her head, "I mean maybe for some girls, yeah, but not the good ones." She licked her lips.

"Well what get's your attention when it comes to guys? How do they attract you? Do they just come up to you, kiss you?"

Steve started to choke on a chortled fit of laughter that escaped his chest, and she elbowed him in the ribs, turning back to give the boy guidance.

"No, don't do that," She counseled, "That'll creep a girl out. Just be yourself. You'll attract the right person by doing that. Don't try to be someone you're not; they can usually sense that. Trust me," She gave him a lighthearted smirk, tossing another chunk of protein behind her shoulder.

They shared a stare for a long time, almost a minute passed before he shrugged his shoulders, letting his eyes drift to the floor. "Sounds lame. I'll stick with Steve's advice."

"HA!" Steve chimed.

She rolled her eyes, grunting as she kicked the pile of dead leaves underneath her sneakers. "Whatever, do what you want. He's right about one thing, I guess, the feeling."

"What feeling? How do you know?" He asked eagerly, glancing up at the two like a lost puppy. He pulled the yellow gloves to his elbows, tightening them around his hands.

"It's like before it's gonna storm, you know?" Steve guided, "You can't see it, but you can feel it. Like this, uh..." He pursed his lips together

as he pondered for the word. "Electricity," He chimed back, "You know?"

"Oh. Like in the electromagnetic field when the clouds in the atmosphere—"

"No no no no no." He repeated, "Like a... Like a sexual activity," He wiggled his eyebrows, moving between Naomi and Dustin.

"Oh," He responded in discernment.

"You feel that," Steve pointed a gloved finger at him, "And then you make your move."

"So that's when you kiss her?"

"No! Whoa, whoa. Slow down, Romeo." He heeded.

"Sorry—"

"Sure," Steve stepped ahead of him, throwing multiple chunks of beef as they all trailed behind him in a cue. "Okay, some girls—yeah, they want you to be aggressive," Steve turned his neck around to shoot Naomi a daggered brow, and she snorted. "You know, strong. Hot and heavy. Like a— I don't know. Like a lion."

"Mmm."

"But others," he persisted, "You gotta be slow. You gotta be stealthy. Like a... Like a ninja."

"Okay, I don't think your euphuisms for girls are going to help this poor boy Steve." She tossed the last cube in front of her, shooting it at the ground with a little too much force, as she watched it splatter into pieces. "Honestly, Dustin, if it's right, it's right. Girls nowadays suck anyways. None of them know what they want."

"Well," Dustin grabbed her empty bucket, and Naomi dropped her dirty gloves inside them. "What type is Nancy, then?"

"Nancy's different," Steve retorted a little too hastily. "She's different than other girls."

"Yeah," Dustin's head dropped, as he placed his bucket inside Naomi's empty one, dropping his last few squares of beef. "She seems pretty special, I guess."

"Yeah," Steve nodded. "Yeah she is."

"So what type's Beth?"

Naomi had almost forgotten about her alter-ego name, until she saw Steve's face go a bright red, and Dustin shoot him a teasing smile.

"Hey," She hissed, "I can hear you dipshits, you know." Better than they thought, too. "And I'm somewhere in between; I'll have you know." She vocalized proudly. "Kind of like a horse, or something. I don't know."

"That's not very attractive," Steve remarked.

"Didn't seem to stop you," She smirked.

Steve choked on thin air, and Dustin started laughing, as Steve let out protests; all of which the two ignored. After a minute, Dustin's laugh faded and his smile faltered once again. "This girl's special too though, you know." He tilted his head, gaze plummeting to the tracks of the train beneath them once again.

"Woah!" Steve bellowed after regaining himself. He held a gloved, wet, raunchy-smelling hand in front of Dustin to halt him. "You're not falling in love with this girl... are you?"

Dustin's brows furrowed, and his bottom lip jutted out as he tried to defend himself. "What? Uh no. No."

"Okay.." Steve started to walk again, "Good. Don't."

"Amen to that." Naomi concurred, kicking her right foot against the steel beams hidden below the foliage beneath her.

"Why?"

Steve frowned, "She's only gonna break your heart, and you're way too young for that shit."

Naomi nodded in agreement, trotting up to meet Dustin. Dustin smiled at her weakly, the first sign of acceptance since she had spoken to the boy. "Don't get too caught up in this chick though. Love is magical and all, permeating the mind, the body, the spirit and what not. It's exhilarating, but terrifying. Make sure she's really worth it."

"Thanks," he responded despondently.

They walked in silence, Steve being the only one left with meat at this point. Their trip to the grocery store was clearly undersupplied.

"Faberge."

"What?" Dustin asked, glancing at Steve who had just said something completely jargon to them both.

Steve exhaled loudly, like he was admitting a crime he had just admitted in court. He pointed his index finger at his hair, being careful not to touch the perfect locks with his greasy gloves. "It's Faberge Organics." He gesticulated with his hands, keeping a small handful of cubes in his right hand as he shot them at the ground like rocks. "Use the shampoo and the conditioner, and when your hair's damp—It's not wet!" He interjected himself, "When it's damp..."

"Damp," Dustin nodded fervently.

"You do four puffs of the Farrah Fawcett spray..." He admitted, eyeing Naomi behind him as Dustin moved ahead.

Both of them tried to conceal their laughter as Steve glared at them in annoyance.

A smile grew on Dustin's face, and he tried his best not to hide it, but he couldn't help it. "Farrah Fawcett spray?" He giggled, his words vacillating.

"Yeah." He confessed, stopping on the train tracks, "Farrah Fawcett spray." He took a threatening step towards Dustin, who didn't appear all that jeopardized, and stabbed a finger at him, piece of meat wedged between his hand. "You tell anyone I told you that, and your ass is grass. You're dead, Henderson. You understand?"

Dustin nodded, his lips curling back. "Yup." He avowed, "Why not her, though?" His body swayed towards Naomi, and name grimaced.

"Because," Steve answered nonchalantly. "No one knows her. No one would believe her."

"Again, I'm right here." She grumbled, "Hearing is 100% boys." Dustin laughed, and Steve joined in after as they continued their trek again. "Where are we heading, anyways?" She really didn't know Hawkins all that well, but knew it was a pretty small area. The plan was to attract him.... And that's as far as they had got before bickering over the song choice in the car.

"I know a place," Dustin answered, "Not too much farther. We can try to corral him there."

Naomi pursed her lips as she pondered. "I don't think this is working. I hear nothing. I see nothing" She referred to the chunks of beef they tossed at the ground. "It's just gonna attract other animals. SHouldn't we use something a little stronger?"

"You're an expert at this? Yeah?" Dustin growled back at her, "Hopper teach you that too?"

She scowled, "Who shit in your cereal this morning?"

"Oh I'm sorry!" He yelled mordantly, "I'm trying to find my the monster I found who grew three freaking feet in THREE days. Oh! And did I mention... ate my FREAKING cat!" The last 'freaking' enunciated his lips, and spit flew from his mouth.

She cowered from him, frowning as she tightened her grip on the backpack encircling her shoulders. The straps squeaked against her usual-clad leather jacket, and she grimaced. "I'm just saying... we need something stronger. Something that'll attract him more—or we'll never coral him."

Steve dropped the last chunk of beef by their feet, and tossed his grimey gloves in the bucket, handing them to Dustin who took them reluctantly. "Like what? You got a better idea Beth? Cut yourself open and we drag your dead body across the forest?"

Her head tilted as she bit her lip, shrinking as she thought about the four bags of blood sloshing around in her pack. They were room temperature now- which was worse than being cold. She could make another trip to the hospital before she decided to leave, so she could spare them despite being a little hungry.

"What?" They asked in unison, ogling the girl with uncertainty.

She hissed in a breath. "If I tell you, you promise to ask no questions?"

"Why would we do that?" Steve snapped.

"Just trust me." She grumbled back.

Steve shook his head in disbelief as Dustin watched the two like fighting parents bickering over a house chore or something financial related. "You know, I'm getting awfully tired of trusting you and receiving no explanation."

She snatched Steve's hand, holding it between her own as she tugged him to a halt. Dustin continued a few steps, only just within ears reach, and watched as Naomi grasped Steve's hand within hers. She locked eyes with him, biting her lip nervously as they poured into each other. "Just trust me, okay? I'll explain everything later. I promise. It's complicated..."

His eyes drifted from her apprehensively, "Jesus, isn't everything in this town," He complained.

"Please, Steve." She held his warm hand taut between hers, her thumb reassuringly rubbing his calloused knuckles. She watched as his eyelids fluttered, and listened to his pulsating heart beat quicker. She really wasn't ready to explain to the two what was going on. She'd like to avoid it if all possible, but right know; she wanted to help her friends; even if they were new-fangled. "Trust me," She dropped her forehead, eyes fastening with his again.

His jaw compressed, and he nodded; a few stray hairs falling out of place as he retrieved his hand back, rubbing it as if he had just been scolded. Her hands were left empty and cold again, his warm; living

touch like a smolder to her cold lifeless hands.

"Okay?" She darted from Steve to Dustin.

"Okay, they both nodded apprehensively, regarding her with intensity as she unzipped her backpack, reaching into it slowly as if she was about to pull out an explosive. Her hand dug around for the blood packs, and she picked them all up with one hand by the plastic handle that was used to attach them to the IV for transfusions. She dragged them out slowly, and she watched their relaxed faces grow with fascination and trepidation as she pulled out the bags of blood.

They recoiled instantly, like she had just pulled a gun to their face.

"What the f—"

"Why do you have blood in your bag?!" Steve panicked, "And you've been carrying that around for three days with me!" He grabbed the side's of his head as he twirled in a circle, his head falling back as he ruffled his own locks. "No wonder those men were looking for you!"

"Trust me!" She reminded them both. "I'll explain it when the time is right. I'll explain everything."

Steve jumped back to face her, jeering forward as he shot her a pained look. It hurt her to see him like that, like she had scared the boy. It was just a little taste of what they both would feel like if she really told them. She handed Dustin a bag of O negative— who held the sack like some sort of alien substance, tossing it and feathering its weight between each hand.

She tried a pleading look at Steve, whose face softened as she watched him give in. "Beth..." he wavered.

She gave him a weak smile, dimples pressing themselves deep in her cheeks. "I promise, Steve." She thought back to the word 'promise' and how much it meant to her. How much it had meant to Eleven. How the meaning of the word had completely shifted in the last year she spent in Hawkins. Steve would never know that depth of the word, but to her she knew it held a lot more. She wouldn't break it, she'd have to tell him eventually. "I promise," She repeated.

He nodded, giving in as he released a breath. "Okay." He grabbed the bag, popping open the small plastic "T" and leading the two of them.

She tore into hers with her teeth, letting out a satisfied sound that only she could hear as the smallest amount of blood touched her lips, igniting her taste buds. She held her bag to the floor, and let it drip like a leaky faucet.

The three of them continued their march to wherever they were, occasionally chatting about Max, or Dart. Steve had shied on the subject of Nancy, in which Dustin shined on the topic of his friends and where they were. Dustin said they were to meet at whatever destination they were headed to for help.

When they reached a fork in the train tracks, Dustin directed them to go left. They followed his demands, and eventually, the small line of trees that lined the train tracks opened up. The train tracks drifted off to the right, while they headed more West. They continued until they reached the edge of the woods and eventually, they were met with a clearing.

"Is this where he's meeting us?" Naomi asked as they paused, observing the clearing. She held up a hand to shield her eyes from the burning sunlight; something that still made her uncomfortable despite the cursed ring that allowed her to walk in the day.

Dustin nodded.

"Oh yeah," Steve pressed his tongue to the side of his cheek, an action he often did when analyzing something. "Yeah, this'll do. Good call, dude." Steve removed the black ray bans that Naomi hadn't even noticed he had been wearing, and hooked them on his shirt, walking ahead of them.

Dustin dropped the buckets, following him.

Naomi scanned the open surroundings. She was on a small hilltop that sloped below to a number of retired cars and junk. There were plenty of leftover scraps of metal, and even an aged bus to the right. She observed as the two greeted Lucas and the red head. Immediately, they had gotten to work on tonight's tomfoolery plan to

trap Dart the baby Demogorgon and she sighed to herself.

She had a strong feeling it was going to be a long night.

Naomi had been introduced to Lucas and Max, despite meeting them once before. They seemed both very sweet, but the tension was palpable in the air between the trio of pre-teens in their chaotic love triangle. Lucas had filled Max in on everything that had happened in the town and Hawkins Lab. To some surprise, she didn't believe them. Her showing up was Lucas trying to prove to her.

She introduced herself to the two as Elizabeth, reciting the same story she had to Steve and Dustin. Lucas kept his distance, which was kind of duplicitous of him; but she understood.

They had a game plan. It was a quickly formulated and promptly done one, but it was a plan. They took the scrap they could and shielded it around the bus, covering the perimeter of it with a skirt of metal. They grabbed a large piece and kept it inside between a row of seats in case they needed an extra shield from the monster between the bus door and them. They brought a wooden ladder in and placed it through the fire exit, making a small fort on the top of the bus with tires to look out when the time was right.

Naomi helped Steve lather the place in gasoline for when they were ready to set the thing on fire; as Steve had mentioned that that had scared it off formerly when he fought the Demogorgon.

The sun started to drown into the horizon, engulfing itself in inky darkness as the last rays of light glimmered through the forest foliage. It was the blue hour, her favorite time of day. She enjoyed it more than sunrise and sunset, as the sky was lit up in a brilliant sapphire, waves of black stretching closer and closer like a crashing wave on the sand.

She glanced over at Steve, hands on her hips as she displayed a proud smile at the five's work.

"Think it's gonna work?" She asked apprehensively.

"I hope so," he dusted off his dirt-swathed hands and stood beside

her. They stood watching the last of the blue wash away, and Naomi felt Steve rock back and forth on his heels beside him. "So..." he inhaled a breath, "Are you going to tell me yet?"

She shook her head, "Not yet, S."

He gave her a weak smile, hands poised on his hips now, and he nodded; strays of hair dipping below his forehead. "Alright. I trust you."

She was relieved to hear those words, sinking into her posture more comfortably as Steve gave her a reassuring pat on the back. "Can I ask you something?"

"Shoot," She encouraged, folding her arms over her chest as her brown eyes remained on the horizon.

"How come you don't talk about yourself much, I mean when you do, I have to force it out of you. Where'd you grow up? What are your parents like? Do you have siblings?" He directed at her.

She shrugged, giving him a weedy closed-lipped smile. "I had a brother; he's gone now. Mother passed from cancer, dad left when I was young. Sort of on my own at this point—town surfing."

He nodded, "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," She shook her head, "This past year was one of the greatest years."

"I'm glad to hear that," He bumped her shoulder. "Do you think you'll stick around; in Hawkins, I mean?"

She shrugged, "I'm not sure, Steve." And it was the truth. She really did not know. Her best guess was that she couldn't linger much longer. She had been so back and forth, but ultimately, she knew what she had to do. How could she stay with the threat of being caught and killed by the Winchester's? Or when the Hawkins' Sheriff hated you?

"If this was the best year you've had, then why leave?" He questioned.

She ran a thumbnail along her bottom lip, sighing. "Steve... It's complicated."

He nodded, understanding why she was hesitant. "Don't sweat it." E lifted a finger, then dropped it. His mouth opened, and then he closed it as his internal thoughts trampled over one another. "Can I say something else? I mean... I don't know if this'll change anything but still. I gotta say it or I'll regret it—especially if we're gonna die out here babysitting these little dipshits."

She let out a soft giggle, "Go for it, Harrington."

"Okay," he started, kicking his spiked bat that was beside him on the dusty ground. "I know I've only known you for like three days, but three days straight is like 72 hours..."

"Boy you sure as smart—"

"Shut it." He yapped, holding up a finger. "What I'm saying is, you know, I enjoy your company. For the most part; I mean."

"Even when I'm making out with your face?" She challenged.

He frowned cheekily at her, "Maybe; but that doesn't leave us. Okay? So... What I'm trying to say is all I've really got is Nancy. I'm not trying to word this in a way where you're some rebound friend... but —without Nancy I really have no one. My parents are never home. I'm always alone."

"Are you begging me to stay, Steve Harrington!" She mockingly twirled a chunk of hair between her fingers as she fluttered her eyelashes at him, "Oh gosh Steve Harrington wants to be my friend!"

"No! No." He shot down. "Wait. Would that make you stay?"

"If you kissed my feet, maybe," She laughed.

He shook his head. "The point is; you seem like a genuinely nice human being, and I haven't had a lot of those in my life. The only other one I had I'm losing. I think you're pretty funny, and stuff. Sure this town is pretty small, and the people aren't particularly the best... but a select few definitely make up for it." He threw his head back to

glance at the three in the bus, bickering about something while Lucas and Dustin wrestled each other over something that was in Lucas' possession. "I think you'd learn to love it."

She licked her lips, exhaling loudly. "It's not that I don't wanna stay, Steve." She shut her eyes, pinching the bridge of her nose. "Trust me, I'd give anything to stay—to not have to run anymore."

She watched his teeth grit together, and his jaw clench as his eyes drifted. "So that's what you're doing." He murmured, "Running..." He scratched the side of his face excessively. "And those men?"

All she could do was nod.

He nodded. "I'm sure whatever it is; it's justifiable. You're a good person, Beth."

She tried to hold her breath, suppressing the electrical feeling that you got in your face right before you teared up. *Oh how wrong could this boy be?* She thought to herself. Her voice was caught in her throat, and she remained silent.

"Rage, rage against the dying of the light," he quoted in a husky voice, gesturing to the evaporating illumination.

"I'm not a good person, Steve." She released in a single breath, pinching the bridge of her nose to push back the tears in her eyes and liberate some of the pressure forming in her glabellas area. "I've done some bad stuff. I don't deserve to be with you guys, to be with Hopper."

He was very attentive to her now, his whole body rotated towards her.

"I'm no good." She stated, "I've made mistakes. I've loved, I've loathed. I've fought, I've made up. I've hurt, and I mean really hurt—and I've forgiven. I was a little numb before I got to Hawkins."

He didn't reply, and that was the most respectable thing to do in her mind. He didn't really know her—he couldn't disagree, nor could he agree. They just remained in comfortable silence. He reassured her with a hand wrapped around her frame, and he held her close to his

side, resting his head atop her. They remained comfortably like that, their eyes directed at the tree line for a long time until they headed back to the bus.

"What the hell are you guys doing out there? The sun's down. Set the trap." Dustin hollered from the bus, cupping a hand around his heart-shaped lips.

"Jesus, dude. Calm down; it set like three seconds ago," He rumbled, moving past him. "Still got that last bag?" He asked her as they trotted to the bus.

"Yeah," She pulled it from her pack, tossing it at Steve, as she grabbed the lost blood bag and held it in her hands. She squished it back and forth, like it was a stress ball. She held it tightly in her hands, and she could feel the odd glances from the other two behind her; but she ignored it. Her mouth got all tingly again, her glands salivated and her stomach growled.

It seemed bittersweet to give the last one up, considering she had broken a hand to leave with it unscathed.

"Dude—" Dustin started, but stopped once he saw her tear the plastic in two, ripping it straight down the middle with her sheer force, and watching as the blood splattered on the ground; right beside a small pile of some dead mice they had found in the forest. The trail of gasoline led to there, and all they had to do was light it from the bus once they got close enough.

"Let's go," She instructed, and they both followed her into the bus, Steve placing a large metal sheet in front of the door after closing it.

The next hour was spent lounging around miscellaneous spots in the bus while they waited for something; anything. Somehow, there was some unspoken feeling between the five of them that they knew it was gonna happen... that Dart would find them. They all trusted that feeling, and remained quiet for a majority of the waiting. Steve had sat by the door, his head leaned against the sheath of metal, while Max was on a red chair across from him, detached from its previous place.

Naomi was on a bus seat beside Steve, her head hanging off the edge while her body was parallel, laying horizontal with the seat. She smoked her second cigarette that night, trying to pass the time; whilst also stifling the lust for the litre of blood that she could smell (even with the stench of gasoline overpowering it)

She tossed Steve her infamous zippo after, and he played with it, flicking it up and down, up and down. The noise of the metal against metal got annoying after a long while, but she didn't say anything; she didn't want to break the silence. She just shut her eyes, breathing in a lungful of the smoke, and let her hair fall further over the edge of the seat.

At some point, she snatched Dustin's hat and placed it atop her face to shield the light of her flickering zippo. He had detested, but didn't take it back.

Lucas had eventually decided to go on lookout, since it was getting later and that ominous feeling of waiting for death had crept upon them, and they felt the dark-pocalypse coming closer and closer.

"So you've really fought one of these things before? Max had asked another half hour later. Naomi removed the hat from her face to peek out.

Steve looked at her without speaking and just nodded.

"And you're really like totally 100% it wasn't a bear?" She pressed, red brows sinking deeper in her face.

"Shit." Dustin cursed, stopping his pacing, "Don't be an idiot. Okay? It wasn't a bear."

Max was taken aback.

"Why are you even here if you don't believe us?" he taxed, his face straining in annoyance. "Just go home."

She rolled her eyes, standing from the seat and starting for the ladder. "Geesh. Someone's cranky. Past your bedtime?"

Naomi snorted; she saw a mini her in Max.

Once she was out of ear's reach, a slow smile bloomed on Steve's lips as he spoke to Dustin. "That's good. Just show her you don't care."

"I don't." he dismissed, starting to pace again.

Steve sent a wink to him, and Naomi snorted a laugh again.

"Why are you winking, Steve? Stop."

Steve licked his lower lip, eyes glancing away from the grumpy teen.

Naomi tossed the hat back, and Dustin caught it with a reluctant catch. He placed it back on his head and readjusted it to fit comfortably on his curls.

Another few minutes passed. Naomi played lazily with a feather on her red faux-lather seat. She lifted it in the air and let it float to her chest, watching it intently as it landed on her pale skin; and then she'd repeat it.

"Gimme that," Naomi murmured with another cigarette between her lips, waving at Steve for the zippo. She was getting irritable from the waiting, the boredom, the smell of mostly-fresh blood outside, and the cramped front of the bus with humans surrounding her.

Steve frowned. "You know they say that stuff's bad for you," He scolded as he reached to hand it to her.

"Thanks Mom," She grabbed the lighter, She sat her head up to light it, cupping her hand around the cigarette to protect the flame. She popped open the zippo, moving it closer to ignite it.

Just as the flame was about to catch, they heard it.

Close in the distance of the trees, a thunderous screech echoed; as if the monster was broadcasting it's arrival to them.

"Shit," She cursed, as they all ran to the windows to see. She tossed Steve her zippo, and they all pressed their faces to the glass, wiping the moisture from it to peer through to the junk yard.

"You see him?"

Dustin asked; bottom lip jutting out in bewilderment.

"No," Steve replied.

"Nada," Naomi answered.

His face scrunched up as he scrutinized for a moment more before hollering up to the other two. "Lucas! What's going on?"

"Hold on!" He called back.

The rise of heartbeats on the bus was unanimous.

A low growl emitted somewhere within the growing fog that seemed to appear out of nowhere, and she twitched, making Steve and Dustin jump.

"What?"

"I heard a growl..." She whispered, as if Dart could hear her.

She was nervous to be honest. Normally she wasn't if it involved fighting a hunter or another vampire; a witch maybe, but she had no idea what's he was dealing with here. This wasn't the supernatural—it was another dimension.

"I've got eyes! Ten O'clock!" Lucas shouted. "T-Ten o'clock!" Their eyes shifted to the imaginary clock that they were positioned in, glancing to the left ever so slightly.

There, between patches of mist, she saw a dark form prowling between the small clouds. It was hard to make out its true being; but she could see something there. It was about the size of the wolf; but the way it was positioned was so other-worldly it sent shivers down her spine. Its back was curved in an S-like shape, and she could see the glistening of its slick skin from here. She had never seen anything like it. "Holy shit..."

"What's he doing?" Dustin asked hushly.

"I don't know..." Steve answered, eyes unblinking from the monster.

There was a low chitter as he moved around in the fog, stalking its new surroundings. It wandered for a moment, and she could hear it sniffing, but it didn't move towards their lure.

"He's not taking the bait, why's he not taking the bait?" Steve panicked.

"Maybe he's not hungry," Dustin suggested.

Naomi glanced at the two at the window beside her, "Maybe it's the gasoline; it might be too strong."

Steve started to anxiously breathe labored breaths. "Maybe he's sick of cow..." Steve removed himself from the window, and Naomi and Dustin turned to face him.

"What are you doing?" she sibilated, "Steve?"

HE looked at both of them for a long moment, a bold expression on his face as he attempted to show confidence; but the stammering heart in his chest proved otherwise to her. In a swift motion, he spun to grab his nail-bat and started for the door.

"Steve? Steve what are you doing?" Dustin asked, but they already knew what he was about to do.

Steve pivoted, turning to Naomi. "Just get ready." He grabbed the zippo from her spot on the seat and tossed it towards her. She caught it in one hand, but she was frozen in place, staring at the boy in bewilderment as he exited the bus; ready to risk his life for the four of them. The metal creaked as he shut the door; squealing from its retired state.

"What the shit!" Dustin cursed, running back to the window. "Steve, no!"

She had barely realized what had occurred. Next thing she knew, Steve was gone, and as she ran to stand beside Dustin, she saw him enter the thick fog, ready to face the molting monster.

Steve was apprehensive in his steps, his sneakers taking lifted but hushed steps. She could still see the black mass to Steve's left, but the

fog was coming in quicker now, and more patchy. She would see it, then a cloud of mist would come by and she'd see it in a different position. She didn't like not knowing... Not seeing.

Steve clutched his bat between both hands, holding it as if he was ready to strike a pitch in a ball game. She could see his calloused knuckles blanch white in his vice, and she watched as Steve twirled it around.

"Steve!" She whisper-shouted, but he ignored her to no surprise. She grumbled.

There was a gurgling noise, and then a louder much closer warning growl.

Steve let out a shaky breath. He whistled three times menacingly, swinging his bat around again, and then analyzed his surroundings to look for the creature. "Come on body..." he antagonized, whistling once again. His bat drifted back and forth like a pendulum, small tornado's of fog drifting around it.

Max sloppily rushed down the steps of the ladder, running to their side's. "What's he doing?!"

"Expanding the menu..." Naomi muttered, eyes unmoving from her gaze on Steve.

"Come on buddy..." She heard him entice, taking another few steps. He was starting to get lost within the mist now, which worried her. She glanced back to the Demogorgon's spot, and panicked when she it vacant.

"Oh crap..." She muttered. She removed herself from the window, gaze still on it despite not being able to see Steve.

This time, Dustin questioned her, "What are you doing..." He glanced from Max, back to her. "And why do you have that look on your face...?"

She hadn't realized there was a look on her face. Maybe her body knew what it was gonna do before she did. This was it, this would be her big reveal. She'd have to fight this motherfucker off of Steve's

body, hopefully in time to save his ass, and the only way to get there fast enough and actually keep him alive was to use her powers.

Shit, this was it.

They'd most likely think the last of thoughts toward her now.

"E-Elizabeth," Dustin stammered as she moved to the door. She didn't reply, though. She just tossed him the zippo and instructed him to close the door after her.

"What are you doing?!" He asked panic-stricken.

She gave him a shrug, because she truly did not know what was about to occur after all this. "I'm about to save his ass." She opened the doors, glancing out into the fog. She couldn't see the two of them anymore, but she could still hear Steve alive and well. She knew his heartbeat as it differed from the rest. A twitchy rhythm personalized it.

Her sneakers moved to the edge of the step and she exhaled a large breath as her toes dipped out into the exterior. She inhaled a large lungful of air through her nose, readying her ability to sniff out Steve and whizz over to him. And then...

She ran.

A/N: Hope you enjoyed this. The next chapter's gonna reveal a lot about Naomi or 'Beth' as she's known to them, and I guess we'll find out what their reactions are... what do you think?

Thanks again for reading. Writing truly makes me happy and to know people read it means the world to me.

Again, just wanna mention that I might do a slow burn Steve/Naomi but it won't be my main focus of the story, as my priority is kind of the relationship of Eleven, Naomi, Hopper and everything they experience. P.S... I kinda wanna make her a close sister-ish type of relationship with one of the boys. Who do you think with though? Sorry if any of this doesn't make sense... I'm really tired and it's late.

Enjoy!

3CHOES: Thank you for your review! I agree I've written too many romance that I'm kinda over it, but I do love Naomi and Steve's relationship so I will incorporate it somehow. i might made a side story regarding just them eventually.

escafil123: Wow, this review made me so happy! Especially to here you wish Kali's role was like Naomi! Thank you for your support!

The true hero of Skill: Voila!

Screemnigcheesepuff: (Nice user by the way!) Thank you, I love how it tied so well together as well!

Tata for now!

LEX

13. Chapter 13: Unearthing

As always, I do not own Stranger Things, Netflix, or Supernatural. Appreciate ya.

She could feel the warmth that seeped into her muscles, the rush of the second wind. She pumped her legs, gaining momentum as she used her supernatural abilities to lope past Steve in the blink of an eye. Her rocket made the mist disperse around her, and there – she saw, standing only a feet or two from her was a monstrous being nearly the size of her.

Its skin glistened like that of a slug, and its eyes were absent in the diminished light. It had the same form of a large wolf, only its tail was much thicker and slick. It had a patch of yellow on its back, sticking out like a sore thumb in the swatches of green and black that swathed its body. Its structure was very boney, and she saw its spine stick out of its thin, pulsating skin.

She coughed, gagging as she looked at the vile creature. How could Dustin have loved a mini version of this? And tried to impress a girl with it?

Its face was starting to peel open, like a blooming flower with five flaps that resembled petals. She could see the hundreds of rows of razor-like teeth it had as it let out a low warning growl, breathing a lungful of rotten-smelling air.

She winced.

She glanced back at Steve for a moment, seeing the shock on his face. It wasn't just bewilderment and confusion; it was literal emotional and physical shock. His mouth agape, his stance still wide as his bat barely clung to his fingertips; and sure—he filled with trepidation, but he didn't look scared of her.

He looked as if he just witnessed a plane crash in front of him.

She could hear Dustin and Lucas freaking out in the bus as well.

"GO!" She shrieked, waving her hand at him to return to the bus.

His reaction was delayed, feet unmoving until the beast finally lunged for her, kangaroo-kicking from the grass and leaping up to her.

Her quick reflex managed to shove him out of the way with intended force, his body crashing into the broken down truck beside them. The glass smashed, pieces tinkling to her and Steve's feet.

"STEVE!" She shrieked, hearing another growl from behind her.

"Watch out!" She heard Lucas yell from his fort atop the bus. "3 o'clock!"

Her head darted back, and she hissed, fangs protruding and her feet kicking angrily into the dirt. It was over, now. She glanced to Steve, her eyes flaring a vibrant red while sporting the vampiric veins under her eyes.

He gulped, and finally, he ran.

The second demogorgon leaped for her, tackling her front. Its mouth contracted, gurgling as its teeth projected out, ready to take a bite out of her.

"Jesus..." She grimaced, her face shying away from it as they somersaulted to the floor. She grabbed it by one of the petals of its mouth, spinning it across the clearing. She could hear the recovering one approach behind her, and she sped over to it. She grabbed it by its face, gripping as tightly as she could to its thick skin, and tossing it across the mossy floor.

It screeched in anger at her, but she was too busy holding off the next one that came for her life.

Three of them gathered upon broken down vehicles and scraps of junk, prowling towards her with their heads dipped, like a pack of wolves. She heard them chitter as their three-toed feet scurried closer to her.

"BEHIND YOU!" Lucas screamed, his voice cracking.

She turned her head as much as she could while her eyes remained on the imminent three, but eventually her pupils darted to the two approaching menacingly behind her.

"Shit," She cursed.

Some hissed at her, while other's growled. One snapped their mouths at her, teeth clattering together, and the noise alone made the hairs on her forearms stand up.

She made the first move, as opposed to waiting for impending doom, and moved as fast as she ever had in her entire supernatural life. She sped up to the first three, standing behind them. She watched as their heads raised, sniffing the air like confused dogs. She kicked two of them off of slabs of metal, and watched as the descended to the floor with a wet splat. The last one stuck to her leg; and she let out a small groan expressing her frustration as its shark like mouth clung to her feet, teeth sinking through her sneakers and drawing blood. It seeped through the fabric, soaking into her jeans.

She grabbed a sheet of metal, ripping a slice from it with impeccable strength, and used it to stab the creature in its neck.

It was still alive but the pain startled it enough to let it fall. She ran back to the other two, who were a little too close for comfort at this point. One leaped on her back while the other charged for her front. She moved out of the way, clotheslining the first one with her foot while she spun in circles, the other one piggybacking her like a small child.

She could feel the slime stick to her as she tried to shake him off. Her hands reached back; blindly grabbing empty handfuls of air, but his limbs encompassed her, pinning one of her arms down. So she decided to spin. She spun and spun and spun in a circle at an immeasurable speed, and the dizzy creature fell on it's back.

She hissed at it with protruded fangs, and she felt pleasure as she watched it retread in fear.

"Come on you bastards!" She screamed from the depth of her lungs, watching spit fly into the air.

Two more came up behind her, and she lunged after them, grabbing one by the feet and spinning it into the other. Once that one went knocked unconscious, she lifted the one she had in her hands and let it fall with a deafening squash against the ground, bones cracking and skin squelching.

"YEAH!" She heard Dustin cheer from afar.

She smiled to herself, punching one out her way that started for her. She was pretty proud of the amount of them that were on the floor... but Steve was right, giving them a kick or a punch wasn't going to knock them down. They needed to be set on fire.

They all managed to recover, except maybe two or three, and she watched as they all came, one after another trying to get a bite out of her. She moved as quick as she could, but as soon as she removed one, the next one jumped for her. She dodged some of them, but there was too many.

She bit into one's neck, attempting to rip anything that resembled a jugular, but she couldn't even tap an artery. It was as if they were just filled with tar-like liquid and sludge inside. She gagged, spitting out the rancid substance onto the grass.

She just kept hissing, trying to claw their skin or inflict wounds upon them. They all dog piled a top her, and she could feel their mouths close over limbs, one even attached themselves to the back of her head. She bellowed as its teeth tore into her skull, ripping clusters of hair from her thin scalp/

Her arms windmilled, and her feet kicked. She heard them scream in pain, yelping and crying, but she still couldn't hold them off. There were just too many.

She heard the bus door creak open, and she spun around, peering through the glossy dermis to make view of Dustin.

"I can't hold them off!" She shrieked, "There's too many!"

"ABORT MISSION!" He shouted, hands cupped around his lips as he slurred the double 'SS'.

She groaned, pulling one from her hair. She felt a larger chunk rip, and she growled, pushing the ones on her upper torso off.

She glared at it, eyes burning as her vision increased. She didn't let anyone touch her hair. Only Eleven had. She wasn't about to let some stupid creature named after a monster in a dungeons and dragons game break that.

Her hand dived for one of its mouth petal, and she ripped it off of its face. It let out a loud screech, and the others around her mimicked the noise.

"ABORT!" Dustin repeated, "ABORT!"

Her jaw clenched, and she dug her feet deeper into the thick mud beneath her. The mix of the sludge coming off of them, and the dirt on the ground made a pile of brown slime that stuck to her like quick sand.

"ELIZABETHHHH!" That was Steve's voice.

She backed up hastily, slamming the one on her back into the same scrap truck, black and red blood smearing across the rusted paint. She grunted, throwing off the ones on each of her legs, and booked it towards the bus.

The wind caused her hair to whip around her face, and the hair stuck to the slime that she was swathed in. When she made it to the bus steps, Dustin and Lucas practically yanked her inside. She crawled backwards, the boys and Max tugging at her jacket as Steve replaced the metal sheet in front of the door.

She heaved breaths, her body rising and falling with each inhale and exhale. "Holy shit..." She breathed.

"Are they rabid?!" Max panicked, her back as far back against the opposite side of the bus as possible.

She watched as the ogre's charged for them, their shoulders pressing into the metal and warping it.

"Shit!"

"Oh God."

She wasn't sure whose mouth's the words were coming from anymore. She had her right shoulder pressed against the metal whilst Steve was on his back, both feet holding the door with as much power as he head. His knees trembled, and she shot him an exasperated look, to which he returned. She tried not to focus on the fact that he wasn't avoiding her monster-like face, but she couldn't help but feel a little hopeful inside.

They all screamed as they charged again, and they both felt the weight of the metal give in as the metal warped more.

The kids fell back, retreating as far behind as possible.

Steve's footing slipped with the barrel, and they managed to find a weak spot. One of them stripped through, skin ripping on the rough material as it used its front legs to push itself further

"SHIT!" She bit her tongue as she stood her ground, pushing the others away from her. Steve didn't move with the others to the back of the bus, though. He swung his bat around, and when one leaped for him, he held an arm out to stop her while he beat the monster with his bat, nails jamming into his skull repeatedly. It splattered the tar-like liquid over them, but he continued.

"Is anyone there?" Dustin yelled into his walkie talkie, "Mike? Will? GOD? ANYONE!" he pleaded.

Another one tried to make its way in, and she kicked it back with the heel of her foot, watching it slam against the floor with her vigor.

There was a loud bang and a creaking of metal above them, and they all shrieked in harmony again.

"Shit!"

"AH!"

"We're at the old junkyard!" Dustin screamed into the speaker, "And we are going to DIE!"

Naomi tried to help fight off the one Steve had himself enraveled with, pulling its face off the bat so he could use the weapon again.

There were loud thumps above them again, but Naomi had herself caught between a fallen Steve and a snapping face in front of her. She could smell its sour pant again, and she saw the black cavernous hole that was its throat open up. Its tongue, a pointy black mass, stuck out at her as it screeched into her face. She pushed back Steve with one hand, and she held the other to the... things... throat. It snapped at her again, mouth opening and closing.

A loud female shriek emitted from the back of the bus. She tried to look, but it was difficult as another demogorgon baby started charging for her from outside. She braced herself for impact, watching a yelling Steve dart to the back of the bus to save the day. "Out of the way! Out of the way!" He panted, "You want some? Come get this!"

She heard it hiss, and it let out a threatening screech.

She squeezed the throat so tightly on the one that she heard a small 'pop' followed by a 'crack' and then she tossed it outside towards the other one ascending towards her. She thought it would make impact, but it never did.

It went still as the monster's stopped their terrorizing, heads darting to the west. It was eerily quiet for a second, and they exchanged perplexed stares, and then all at once they started moving. They leaped over the broken glass and metal, dodging various pieces of litter as they all stampeded away from them.

Naomi brushed her hair out of her face, trudging over to the others as they watched from the window at the back of the bus.

She saw Lucas' and Max's hands intertwined together, but then Lucas broke it as the feeling of fear wore off and confusion set in.

"What just happened....?" She breathed, placing both hands on her hips.

The vehicle was filled with frantic heartbeat and overworking lungs

for the next thirty seconds, and moments later, they heard a monstrous scream in the distance; the creatures broadcasting their ascent towards something else. They weren't running away from them... they were running towards something.

They all decided to exit the bus. Single file, with Steve being the first (despite being only the second strongest—but no one spoke of that yet). He took weary steps, as he cautiously raised his bats, seeing the last of the demogorgons leap off into the fog.

"Think we scared em off?" Dustin asked from the back as they all filed out.

"No." Steve precluded. Once the coast was clear, he relaxed to a fully erect position and swung his back over his shoulder. "No way."

"They're going somewhere." Naomi had said what they were all assuming, and all the others could do was gulp in fear.

"Now that we're wandering in the forest in the middle of the night with our only source of light being Lucas' stupid bike light, I think maybe it's time for an explanation," Steve cleared his throat as they shuffled through the forest. "What the hell happened back there?" His voice sported a slight twinge of anger, which made her grimace. "And don't give me some bullshit answer. We deserve the truth."

"Steve she saved our asses back there, you could be less douchey" Dustin suggested.

She sailed a smirk over her shoulder, and he shrugged back.

Lucas and Max were directly behind them, trailing behind the two and still very frightened from the early events, and Dustin was on the tail, keeping an eye out for anything from the rear; occasionally turning and making Lucas shine his light behind them.

Max walked closely to Lucas, which made her happy to see Lucas smiling, but she felt a pang of guilt for the lonely Dustin who was witnessing his best friend and his crush together. They tried to hide the affection, but trauma tended to bring people together.

She sighed, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. It wasn't a simple sigh either, no, it was a heavy sigh. She exhaled all the grief, the betrayal she was holding. It held her guilt for shielding her true self, and it held the secrets she was keeping from them. She smacked her lips together, turning to Steve to shoot him an apologetic glance in her rugged state. "I'm sorry," She apologized. "I'm sorry I couldn't tell you. But if I told some stranger, couldn't he tell someone else? And that someone would tell someone else... and then another chain of people... The next thing you know the Winchesters—"

"Winchesters? The men looking for you?"

"Yes," She answered quickly, "They're hunters."

"Hunters?" Dustin's face scrunched up. "What do they hunt?"

She stepped over a mossy log, instructed the others to do so as well, and gave an innocent shrug as she divulged. "They hunt the supernatural."

"Supernatural?" Steve frowned.

"Yes."

"And that makes you..." Lucas muttered.

"One of the supernatural," She finished. "Yes." She glanced to Steve. "My real name is Naomi Cross, I'm a 24 year old stuck in a 21 year olds body and I died nearly four years ago." She spat it out so quickly, it was like she was admitting a sin in an AA meeting.

"I don't..." He shook his head, his brows knitting together. "Naomi?"

"Beth's a cover up. I can't trust everyone. I realize now that I was wrong," She turns around to all of them, even Max. "I can trust all of you. Just as you can trust me."

"I'm just confused..." Steve's frown turned into uncertainty as he dragged his bat along the dry dirt. "What do you mean you died?"

She spoke to him with intent eyes, never leaving his pupils as she spoke about her death story. "I mean—when I was 21 years old I

followed my twin brother into an old barn in the middle of the night to a group of people. He sacrificed me to a man who fed me his blood, then chased me in the woods for hours until he snapped every bone in my body and drowned me in a lake."

She hadn't realized that Steve paused, and she had to do a take-back to see him standing, unblinking with a clenched jaw as he watched her.

His head shook slightly as he woke from his daze, and he trotted up to her. They followed the other three from a distance, but still in ear's reach.

"I'm a creature of the night, is what I'm trying to say, S."

"And what creature... exactly... is that?" His jaw hardened again, and she shot him a look as if to say 'you already know' from the bags of blood in her backpack.

"She's a freaking vampire..." Dustin exhaled in an excited breath.

"Bingo," She shot the beaming boy a thumbs up, "And if you tell anyone, I'm literally dead. I'll be dead. Those hunter's are worse than an overprotective mom. They will find you, and then they will track me down."

"Noted," Dustin shot her a faux-frightened look as her eyes blared a bright crimson at him.

"I don't know what the hell is going on..." Max gulped, turning her head back to them. "I mean, do yiu really want us to believe you're a vampire?"

"I do," The three of them said in unison.

Naomi smiled, "It's alright, Max. I expect you to be apprehensive after everything you've seen."

She gave her an awkward smile back.

"Can you eat garlic?"

"Can you go in the sunlight?"

"Do you sleep in a coffin?"

"Yes, yes, and no." she answered the interrogation from Lucas and Dustin. "This ring protects me." She lifted her ringed hand up, wiggling the fingers.

"Have you ever killed anyone?"

That question came from Steve.

She turned to him, lips pressed into a thin line as she nodded slowly.

He nodded, processing it to himself as he looked away from her.

She sighed through her nostrils, and watched as the three of them trotted ahead, leaving the two blossoming friends behind to discuss the display of distrust that was being broken.

"So everything you said was a lie?" he asked after a daunting stillness.

"No," She shook her head, "Not completely. I have been town surfing. I've been hiding here for the past year though."

"Where?" He asked, swinging his back over his shoulder again. "I've never seen you up until this last week. And how'd you get everything? The blood?"

"I had been living with Hopper." She explained, "He'd stolen them for me."

Steve blew a raspberry, a few hairs flying up on his face. "So he's not really your mom's old friend, is he?"

She shook her head. "He saved me from near-death."

"Jesus..."

"Some stuff happened, though. I had to leave." She furthered, "It's complicated, I don't know. Either way, here I am now."

They walked in silence, listening to the three ahead of them chat and

laugh, trying to forget about the harrowing experience previously. Dustin danced around the two, Max laughing while Lucas frowned, flashing his flashlight throughout the forest carelessly.

"S'pretty cool, you know." She watched him shove his free hand into his pocket while he shrugged.

"Hmm?"

She watched him as his eyes remained on their feet.

"You saved our asses. It was pretty cool." He licked his lips. "So... thanks."

She smiled to herself, glancing up at the moon in the sky. It shined on them like a bright flashlight in the dimness of the inky sky. The stars dusted the scene making her heart warm as it reminded her of the Fourth of July.

"What you said earlier, too." He brushed a hand through his disheveled hair, "I trust you two. I don't think you're a bad person either." She lifted a finger to interrupt, but he shushed her. "I don't want yo hear about what you've done in the past either, Naomi..." He tested her name, saying it leisurely like it didn't sound right leaving his lips. "I'm not exactly the greatest dude either, I've had my moments. Whatever is in your past is in the past for a reason. You saving our asses back there says a lot about the type of person you are," he gesticulated with his hand, as she could see the concentration on his face while he spoke. "So whatever you want to say to scare me off—it's not gonna work. I trust you, you're my friend."

She said nothing to him. How could she? After what he had just divulged... She was so appreciative of him, and the others. She didn't deserve to have people like them in her lives. She had done a complete 360 since three years ago; from taking lives to saving lives. She wanted to express to Steve the specifics of what she'd done, but she had a strong feeling he wouldn't listen, and if he did, he wouldn't leave. They were stuck together, with their kid-friends to look after.

"Thanks, Steve." That was all she could muster in reply. She linked her arm through his, and they walked comfortably together; trailing after the other three while they headed towards the Hawkins Lab.

A/N: THANK YOUUUU FOR READING! I've gotten so much positive feedback from this fic and I love it. A few notes: anyone wanna make a cover photo? I'd love to see one and I'd credit you! Also; in case you didn't know I imagined Crystal Reed when writing Naomi!

Would anyone read a side fic about Steve and Naomi? Since I don't want romance to be the premise of this story, as my main goal was to make it about Hopper El and Naomi. Let me know so I can start to plan!

3CHOES: ENJOY!

Guest: Will! Good idea and I love your reasoning behind it too. Thank you!

Moonstars: Oh I have a plan muahaha ;)

gamby004: I agree. I didn't really consider Mike but now I am definitely heavily considering it, especially since her closeness with El and how protective she is of her

screemnigcheesepuff: Max! I love Max. Great idea, they are very similar! She deserves an older sibling.

LadyJensen: I'm going to do a one shot story and I'll definitely do a scene like that for you! If it weren't for the age difference I'd deffs do it. I still sometimes wonder if I should've made her older and be in a relationship with Hopper!

THANKS

14. Chapter 14: Home Is Where The Heart Is

I do not own ST, Netflix, or Supernatural.

"So you really... died?" Max licked her petite lips, shoving her hands in her jeans pockets as she walked. The others were ahead, Steve and Dustin chatting with a sprawling Lucas. She heard them bickering about 'the party' and 'breaking rules' and she let them tough it out with Steve as their ref. "What was it like? I mean... to drown?"

She glanced down at Max, mimicking her posture with her own hands shoved in her jacket pockets. "You know, the average person can hold their breath for just under a minute." She raised a brow, "'The instinct not to breathe underwater is so strong that it overcomes the woe of running out of air. No matter how desperate you are, you don't inhale until just before losing consciousness. At that point there's so much carbon dioxide in the blood, and so little oxygen, that chemical sensors in the brain trigger an involuntary breath whether you're still underwater or not."

Max looked ahead as she walked, listening tenderly to Naomi speak.

"Studies say it usually happens 87 seconds after being underwater. It's sort of a neurological optimism from the body. Its thinking '*Holding our breath is killing us, and breathing in might not kill us, so we might as well breathe in*', so after voluntary apnea kicks in, you drown. I imagine it's quite peaceful if all your limbs weren't broken." Her head tilted to Max as she spoke, but remained ahead. "I'm not scaring you, am I?"

She shook her head fervently, "No, no. Not at all. It's interesting, actually."

She cleared her throat, following the boys that took a sharp left off the path and into thicker foliage. "Good." She continued, "I'd like to say it's nice, and you see the light and all, but the water was clouded with my own blood. I barely remember breathing in, but I do remember finally breathing in— and the indescribable pain of finally opening my mouth, and allowing the water to enter. I guess the only

nice part about it was that I had finally stopped panicking, as if in one inhale; all the worry left my body." She ran a thumbnail along her bottom lip. "Then I woke up a few hours later without a beating heart."

"That must've been confusing," She watched as an eavesdropping Steve glanced back, and she gave him a polite smirk.

"At first, I guess. I knew it was going to happen, though. My brother was one of them."

"Was?" She hesitated, "Is he gone now?"

Naomi nodded solemnly, "The shift can change some people. I guess I'm lucky in that way." Lucky didn't seem like the correct word, it just seemed better off than how he was, but she disregarded explaining that to Max.

"How did it change him?"

She bit her lip, feeling as if she was divulging into a little too much of a mature matter for someone her age, and new to the world of the supernatural as well as multidimensions.

"You don't have to answer," She disclosed.

Naomi raised a hand, shaking her head. Max was so alike to her when she was her age, having to establish quicker than most kids. She didn't know what Max's history was, and she made a mental note to ask, but emotional or physical trauma was the only way to do that to a person. "No I will," She pushed a branch away from her, holding it as she let Max walk by unscathed from the thorned bush. "He just wasn't who I remembered him growing up to be. He hurt people and didn't feel bad about it."

Max gave her a crooked smile, a pitiful one. "You mean killed."

She nodded.

"I'm sorry."

Naomi shrugged. "I'm sorry for the people he hurt."

Max nodded, walking ahead. She leaped over a mossy log, glancing back at Naomi. Her red hair swirled around her oval face, framing it nicely, and she smiled. "Thanks for talking to me."

Naomi smiled back, and jogged up to Steve.

Steve encircled an arm around her, pulling her into his side in a joking matter as he laughed. "Naomi doesn't really suit you, to be honest."

"No?" She laughed.

"Nah," He pressed a thumb to his lip as he pondered, "Elizabeth is definitely more you. Maybe if you had longer hair."

She shrugged, rolling his arm off of her. "I did up until a little while ago, actually. Cut it to prove a point to someone." She smiled to herself, thinking of Eleven.

He nodded, "Oh wow, you're that stubborn hey?"

She let out a hearty chuckle.

They walked through the umber-brown forest for another few minutes, Dustin and Lucas chatting the most. They were nearing the lab, they knew that from the unanimous noise of demogorgons howling in the close proximity. They could see the footprints along the muddy self-made trail, and Naomi could smell their rancid slime.

"Keep going," She instructed, "Just a little bit further—the scent is getting stronger." Her voice came out nasaly as he plugged her nose with one hand.

Dustin gaped at her, stopping and heeding the small mass. "That... is... awesome."

She smiled as Lucas smacked the back of his head, urging him to continue on. They followed the moss-veiled trail, tracking the broken footprints of the monsters up a small hill. Boulders and miscellaneous foliage colonized the side of the recently created trail, signaling that they had headed this way.

She frowned as they neared the edge of the forest, her vision picking up very faint light's that should have been a lot brighter in the murky nighttime. She could see the building through fissures in the foliage. It was designed in an x-shape, and it was hard to see that in the low-illumination since it appeared the emergency lights were the only source of luminosity.

"What's up?" Steve asked as they walked, picking up her discern.

"Something's wrong..." The trees started to fall away, revealing the beseckled sky and a running car. She saw the red and white lights from the back of the vehicle, picking up the reverse and brake lights. "There's a car.... I think." Her head cocked in various ways to try and see, and she had only then noticed that the rest of the gang slowed and placed themselves behind her. She walked cautiously, nearing the edge of the forest. She grabbed Lucas' flashlight, shining it between crevices in the vegetation, and her progressing walk dawled as two figures halted the bright beam.

"Hello?" The voice was steady at first, but then it faltered as I got louder, more threatening as it raised in resonance. "Who's there?!" It was a male. She could tell that by the scent, and the lower inflection in the tone. "Who's there?" It repeated.

The four trailed behind her, Steve clinging to her leather dressed arm to try to pull her back as she marched out into the opening. She shined hr flashlight at them directly, watching them wince, and then lowered it so the luster would diminish and she could analyze their faces.

"Steve?!" The voices both replied in unison, confusion tainting their voices. She saw a female on the left, cropped hair about the same length as hers only curlier. She had a taut jaw structure and tiffany-blue eyes. She was a very tiny girl, but very pretty none the less. Beside her, a taller boy stood. His mop of brown hair cascaded over his eyes, and he had a sharp nose, his jaw also chiseled like that of Michelangelo. His eyes were much darker, bags darkening the flesh underneath them.

Naomi frowned, shining the flashlight at Steve, then back to the two strangers.

"Nancy?" Steve released her arm, stepping past Naomi.

"Jonathon..." Dustin gaited ahead, and the two groups joined together.

"What are you doing here?" Nancy's voice was laced with annoyance as she stomped towards them.

"What are *you* doing here!" He challenged, stopping only inches from her.

"We're looking for Mike and Will" She exclaimed, thick brows furrowing together. "And who is that?" She pointed to Naomi, folding the other arm across her small chest.

Steve snatched the flashlight from her, shining it at Naomi like she was a prisoner ready to be interrogated. Naomi's eyes widened at the brilliance, and she shielded her hands over the light, trying to regain her sight as flashes of blue and yellow crossed her field of vision. "Who? That? That's Naomi." He said with such confidence, as if they were supposed to know who she was.

"Greetings," She muttered as she fisted her eyes, trying to see again. She sent them a polite wave.

"O... kay." She flummoxed, "Why is she with you guys?"

"Why do people like to talk about me like I'm not here?" She raised both her arms in frustration, frowning as her vision settled on a bewildered Nancy. She was a pretty girl, much to pretty for anyone to claim, that is. She could see why Steve was so infatuated with her. She didn't seem rude... just bemused.

"She's my friend," Steve crossed his arms, light shining in Naomi's eyes once again. A deceitful noise escaped her lips as she stumbled away from him, causing Dustin to laugh comically from the action.

"F-Friend..." She stuttered, "Okay..."

"Yeah," Steve's chin lifted with confidence, and he remained expressionless. His body went stiff as he stared at them.

A strident screech echoed in the distance, its epicenter resonating from Hawkins Lab, and they all turned their heads toward it.

"Shit." She cursed. Nancy frowned at her, and she overlooked it. "What's wrong? Why are all the light's out?"

"We're not sure," Jonathon answered. "Power's out for some reason; we can't get through the gates."

Naomi sauntered away from them, clenched fists at her side, "I bet I can." She only made it a few steps before Steve protested.

"No! No..." He ran up to her, grabbing her arm which did not go unnoticed by Nancy or Steve, especially when it remained while he spoke. "You're not breaking in there."

"I can," She argued.

He rolled his eyes, "Yes, I know you can. That's not the point. The point is that if you break the gate—what happens when they all come running out later on? It's probably better if they're trapped in there. We need to find a way to open the main gate without breaking it so we can close it if needed later."

"Steve's right," Dustin concurred, stepping from the crowd. "We gotta turn the power on somehow, or find a switch."

"A switch?" Lucas growled, "You think there's gonna be a magical switch that allows us to open the gate without electricity?"

"Sometimes places have a backup generator for this sort of stuff!" He squabbled.

"But this is Hawkins!" He yelled, "Not Washington, DC. It may be a lab, but it's still Hawkins!"

"Guys," Nancy interrupted.

"What if there's a side gate or something?" Naomi suggested, "They gotta have one for emergencies or something when the power goes out, right?"

"Guys," She repeated, louder.

"That's smart." Steve added, "Should we split up?"

"No," Dustin replied at the same time Max and Lucas replied "Yes."

"Guys!" Nancy started everyone with her stridency, and she pushed passed everyone to nod towards the building. "The power's back."

They all quieted as they followed Nancy's gaze to the laboratory whose light's were now on and enlightening the whole entry way. She could see the large concrete barrier that encircled the cross-shaped building, and the barbed wire a few feet tall that added for extra protection.

Jonathon was the first one to run. She watched as dust tornadoes behind him as he sprinted for towards the security box. Steve and Nancy followed next, and the rest of them all gaited after, a fume of dirt left behind.

Jonathon pressed one hand against the glass window, the other repeatedly pressing the red button that read 'open' inside the security box. The chain link fence made no effort to move, though, and they all watched dumbfounded, glancing at one another.

"Let me try," Dustin pushed his way into the booth, sliding past Jonathon.

"Hang on—"

"Let me try, Jonathon!" He smacked the boy's jacket, and she could tell the two were close just from that act alone. Jonathon sighed, allowing Dustin to attempt his same fate as he took a step back.

Dustin's knees fell into a lunge as he fervently pressed the red button.

Naomi rolled her eyes. She was going to have to hop the fence if they didn't figure out anything soon. "Maybe it's a security measure," She suggested, "You know—the power goes out and they don't want anyone coming in so someone has to unlock it from the inside with a key or something, or maybe a password."

She couldn't help but notice the intensity of Nancy's bright blue eyes remaining on her whenever she spoke, and she could tell Steve picked it up too. Steve's heartbeat rose, and Nancy's did as well.

"Son of a bitch!" Dustin cursed, "You know what—" He kicked the buttons with his sneakers.

To their revelation, the gate started to squeal open.

"Hey!" He laughed, "I got it!" But no one listened, as they all rushed towards the gate, waiting eagerly to see what was behind it.

The lights flickered on the first and third floor, and she could see from here that there was a commotion going on in the front entryway.

"What the..." She murmured.

"Just stay here," Steve instructed.

"Think it's them?" Nancy muttered, worryingly picking at the chapped skin on her lips.

"Probably," Jonathon answered.

"Wait here," Steve repeated.

So they did. They waited with gaited breaths, watching as the lights flickered and human-shaped forms ran around. She saw two people dart out of the building, one of them unconscious in the other's arms. She could only wait so long, though. Every second felt like minutes, every minute, hours. She grew impatient, especially as she saw the two figures struggle- panic stricken movements.

"I'm going." She stated, marching away from them.

"Wait!" Nancy yelled.

"Let her go," Steve argued, "Trust me."

"Yeah she can handle herself," Dustin added.

She took leisure steps as she neared the building. The figures looked small, teenager's maybe. One of them struggled to hold up the area, and she could smell fresh blood from here. It smelt like barbecued meat, seasoned and fresh in the dead of summer.

She glanced back at the others, who remained behind the invisible barrier that was the open gate. They all looked so nervous. Steve's hands on his hips, Nancy tucking into Jonathon's side. Dustin bit his nails, while Max stood a comfortable close to Lucas.

She shot them a thumbs up, stealthily tiptoeing closer to the two.

The conscious one saw her approaching, and his body movements expressed dread. "Hurry! Hurry!" He shrieked, his voice tinted with dread. "Guys!" She recognized the voice. It was familiar to her, like she had recalled it from a past life, a dream maybe. She just couldn't pinpoint the exact face of who it emitted from, and she was still too far to see.

She paused her walk as she watched another two figures egress the building, one of them slamming their back against the door, locking it as they applied pressure with a firm shoulder to hold back whatever they were being stalked by.

She quickened her pace, and she could see the demogorgons in view. She saw blood splatter the glass windows, and she heard the pain in the teen's voice as he spoke again. "What happened?!" he screamed.

"NO!" That was a woman's voice, "NO... No... no..."

She could see them now. She could see all of them, and she froze.

She saw Mike Wheeler carrying assumedly Will Byers in a cataleptic state... She saw a distraught Joyce Byers being carried by a man. Jonathon's dire screams for his mother and brother confirmed her estimates and she watched as Jonathon hurtled over to them, a small gust of wind flying past her. She shivered as she remained still on the pavement between both groups.

"Naomi...?" She heard Steve's voice behind her

Naomi remained still, though. She didn't know what else to do. The

man carrying Joyce Byers had stepped into the light, and she could fully see his face under the streetlight then. She didn't know what to do... she felt as if it had been an eternity since she'd last seen him. All the feelings came rushing back... the anger... the rage. She wasn't sure how to confront this man.

"Naomi..." she heard Steve's gentle voice behind her, a hint of confusion at her catatonic state.

She was stolid in her transfixed spot on the concrete. Her knees ached, begging to be released of the pressure she held in her muscles to keep her standing vertical.

It was Hopper.

If she had a heart, it would've fallen into the pit of her stomach at that moment. The man traded off with Jonathon to comfort Joyce Byers, but not before giving her a tight squeeze. His pace quickened, jogging down the small hill from the front of the building—and shot her a look of mystification—as if she wasn't real. He looked like he had seen a ghost. He looked so different than the last time she had seen him—as if he was a ghost. His face was pale, his hair messy. He had a gun slung over his chest, and he fashioned blood-stained hospital clothes. She ignored the aromatic scent that emanated from him.

She managed to drive her mind from that thought, and she remained unmoving as she watched Hopper approach her.

She was so frozen—so numb.

She couldn't help the sob that had escaped her chest.

Jonathon comforted a broken Joyce, while Mike hauled Will, trudging over to watch the commotion. The others had joined them, too. Steve neared her, and she could hear the other kids close behind her.

She caught the hint of a glistening tear welling in one of his eyes, and smiled to herself as she sped over to him. She didn't care if the others saw, they would find out soon if she was going to hold the dog-like

creatures off.

Her body smacked into his chest at an unfathomable speed, and she curled her face into the bloody hospital scrubs as she threw her arms around him. "I'm so sorry..." She blubbered, her voice barely escaping her mouth.

"It's okay kid, me too," She felt his arms embrace her, and she squeezed him tighter.

It felt like an eternity since she had felt human warmth like Hoppers. His body radiated heat, and not from the running. He was just a comforting warm. She breathed in the familiar musky scent off his dirt-swathed skin.

"I shouldn't have left..."she cried. "I should have stayed."

"I told you to go—"

"I should've fought you on it." She argued back, muttering into him as he pushed her hair back. "I shouldn't have given up so easily."

She had realized, over the course of the past few days away from him, that Hopper wasn't a father figure so much as he was like to Eleven. Maybe in some sort of way... But right here; at this moment, all she knew was that Hopper was her absolute best friend. He didn't treat her like a freak, he risked himself to provide her with things she needed. Not even her own flesh and blood had done that before. She had never been so thankful for another human being in her entire life.

Family didn't end in blood, though.

Hopper was her family. She loved Hopper like family. Whether he was like a father, a brother, a weird uncle, he was her family. Maybe he was like a father to her. She wasn't sure. She just cherished him and Eleven as if they were the only two people left on the earth.

"Don't," She heard him gulp, and he tried to hold himself together as he cradled her, "This was on me, Naomi. I'm sorry."

"Me too," Was all she could say back.

She felt his bearded chin rest on her head and she relaxed. She could be eaten by the demodogs right now and accept her fate. She had never felt so belonged in a place in her entire life, not even with Theo. She belonged with Hopper and El. She belonged with Steve, and she belonged with Dustin, Max, and Lucas. She belonged with everyone.

She felt truly happy.

She felt like she had been in pain her entire life, and the epiphany that Eleven and Hopper and everyone else were her people somehow made the pain lessen. She felt unburned, and able to see without restrictions. Her body buzzed with electricity, and contrasting to her body previously, she felt like she couldn't stay idle.

"What happened to you?" She wiped her soggy eyes, taking a step back from him.

"I'll explain on the way." He pointed to the kids and Steve. "Everyone get in a car!"

Steve took a step away from the security podium, crossing his arms as he fashioned a puzzled look. "A little roommate reunion I see?"

Hopper released her, still keeping an arm around her though. "What do they and don't they know? He questioned, eyes darting from face to face.

"I'll explain on the way," She muttered with an infliction.

"I'll join your car," Steve interjected, sprinting up to the two.

She looked up at Steve, smiling as he knew she wasn't going to want to explain the whole thing by herself. She gave him a small rub on the back, and looked back to Hopper.

Just as she turned back to Hopper to discuss the plan, she caught a shy Nancy averting her eyes—as if she had been caught observing something she wasn't supposed to. She almost looked guilty. She understood that things weren't quite comfortable between everyone and took a step farther from Steve, shooting the girl a diminutive smile. Her lips quirked up ever so slightly, and she took that as a

smirk.

She turned to Hopper. "What's the plan?"

Before she finished her question, a loud screeching in the distance resonated from the lab, like a demo-dog was publicizing his crave to slaughter.

"Okay, everyone go. Go!" Hopper waved at them all, hopping as he jumped into the driver's side.

Mike, and Dustin went with the Byers, while Lucas and Max hopped into the back with Steve.

They hadn't even managed to close the doors before Hopper accelerated off into the night. His tires screeched against the pavement, burning rubber as smoke released from the back of the truck.

"Where is she?" Naomi asked in a hushed voice, leaning over to him from the passenger side.

He didn't reply. His gaze remained on the dimly light road while his eyes shifted to her. He swallowed, his lip twitching down.

"Hop...." She muttered. "Where is she?" She started to feel flustered and panicked. The thought of not knowing where Eleven was frightened her.

"She hasn't been answering me," His eyes darted to the radio. "I got stuck in the Upside Down. Joyce and the others saved me and they took us straight here..."

"What? What... What?" Her breathing quickened as dismay plastered her face. She spun to him in her passenger seat. "She's... She's okay, right?"

She could see his face fill with trepidation, now. "I think she's just upset, still. I really messed up."

"We'll fix this, it's fine," She assured, her hand on the door handle. "I'll

find her and bring her here. Keep her where we can see her,"

He shushed her with a finger to his lips, "No!" He grabbed her wrist that pressed against the metal handle, and pulled it back. "No. You're not leaving again."

She blinked at him, eyes wide and confused.

"We need you. Will's not doing too well," He cleared his throat, his eyes still remaining on the road. "She's safer at home."

She hated to admit that he was right. She wanted to see Eleven, but bringing her would just put her in danger, especially since this whole commotion had to do with Hawkins Lab. She didn't want to leave them unprotected, either. Steve had told Hopper how she held off the demogorgon babies at the old junkyard, aided by a very ecstatic Lucas and Max.

She trusted his judgment, deciding against rushing to the cabin to see if El was there or elsewhere.

Hopper explained to her about the gate to the Upside Down that Eleven was forced to open by her 'Papa' Her abilities were used as a remote viewing aided by a sensory deprivation tank, used to spy on a Russian agent when it went wrong, opening up the other dimension. Unfortunately, the gate had never been closed which explained the escaping monsters and Will's faded state. Something that they nicknamed 'The Shadow Monster' was using him... possessing him. They weren't entirely sure.

Joyce's other half had passed back in the hospital with the break of the dimensional-proof glass and the escape of the creatures. They had slaughtered nearly everyone in the place, and they were all trying to find a way to get to Will Byers.

"I'm happy you didn't leave." Hopper's jaw bruxed taut, his eyes failing to leave the street he drove on. He placed his warm palms atop her cold ones, startling her.

It was a time she felt guilty to be in bliss, but she felt the same. She had never felt so right with all of them. She barely even knew any of

them, but as of right now, she knew this was where she was meant to be.

She flipped her hand over to lock it with his, and she looked up at her best friend. She gave his hand a tender squeeze. She had never seen Hopper so scathed and beat up, but for once; she grabbed his hand and she didn't see the black veins slither from him to her.

A gentle smile crept up on her lips, "Me too," She replied.

A/N: So ! By popular demand I will most likely have a side fic filled with one shots from this story involving all characters, and even some romance between Steve and Naomi. I've had the ending planned for so long for this story, so you'll deffs want some oneshots in the mean time before season 3 comes out. I'll try to start the sequel before the show actually comes out, but I can't write much considering I don't completely know the timeline. All I know is that the kids will be in high school the next season. Does anybody have any more info? PM me!

Any other suggestions?

Thanks for everyone that reviewed the last chapter! Still not sure who I will let Naomi act as an older sibling to, but I thought I'd give a taste to Max.

Guest: Next chapter will clear that up! But basically yes, for Eleven she still goes to see her family.

Screemnigcheesepuff: I'm so happy you thought that! Thank you from the bottom of my heart it's reviews like these that push me to continue to write.

gamby004: I'm so glad you thought so! Yes another dimension is so different from the supernatural. She cant fend off everything. Definitely going to do a snarky convo between the two ladies, love the idea! Oh my goodness I had no idea until I googled and you're right she fits perfectly for Naomi too!

LadyJensen: I'm definitely going to, I love Hopper! I hope this

chapter made you happy!

3CHOES: Ah i love her in teen wolf too. Thanks for the review!

15. Chapter 15: Venus Fly Trap

A/N: I do not own ST, SPN, or Netflix.

See you at the bottom!

They stood in the middle of the Byers' living room, surrounded by scribbled pages courtesy of an unconscious Will Byers. She could hear Hopper screaming at someone on the phone in the kitchen. She watched as Jonathon spoke to his brother on the couch, who lay still; his chest rising and falling very tranquilly.

Steve paced nervously, while she lay against the far wall, observing the others. The kids were sitting in the dining room, all on the table eagerly watching a fuming Hopper who had found a number to get in contact with the military. She made her way over to the kitchen, hopping on the counter as Hopper hung up. Steve joined her, facing the window as he nervously ran a thumbnail along his bottom lip, the other arm crossed over his chest.

Dustin stood, waiting for him to speak. "They didn't believe you, did they?"

Hopper sighed. "We'll see."

"We'll see'?! " Mike slapped his hands on the table. "We can't just sit here while those things are loose!"

Hopper frowned at him, his voice turning cold as he barked orders. "We stay here, and we wait for help." He nodded towards Naomi, "She can protect us in the meantime."

She gulped, the responsibility that landed on her making her nervous. "I'll try my damn best," She concurred.

"No," Steve shook his head, "She almost got slaughtered at the junkyard. There's too many."

Hopper shrugged, sighing again. "We just have to wait." To anyone, Hopper's fear would have been concealed behind his gruff face and

his stern, clenched, jaw. To Naomi, she could see through. She knew he was nervous himself, too. She could see he was panicking inside. She could tell in the way his bottom lip shuddered, the way his posture slumped over. She could tell from the frequent glances he took at her.

Their eyes met for a brief moment, and then he looked away, trudging down the hallway to see a grieving Joyce.

Mike sighed, his chin hitting the table in defeat. She watched as Max, Lucas, and Mike, mimicked his defeating posture.

She hopped off the counter, making her way between Mike and Dustin.

Mike gaped at her, just as he had when they first walked in following the Byers' vehicle. His jaw was ajar and his eyes wide. Dustin snorted, while Max rolled her eyes, crossing her arms. He was frightened, she could sense that.

"Stop staring at her like a dog, Mike." Dustin smacked his hand, and he flinched.

"Are you really a vampire?" He asked, ignoring Dustin.

She blew a raspberry, closing her eyes and then reopening them to reveal eyes and teeth to him. He swallowed loudly, leaning as far back in his chair as possible without actually moving it itself. She averted her gaze to Nancy in the living room, who also caught her monstrous appearance; but didn't turn away. Instead, she gifted her a gentle smile and turned back to Jonathon who was still whispering loving words to his younger brother.

She shut her eyes, concealing herself again and glanced back to Mike. "Believe me now?"

He said nothing.

"You're nervous." She stated with a smirk, glancing to his chest. "I can tell from your heartbeat."

He coughed, flabbergasted by her abilities. "A-Am not!"

"HA!" Dustin spat, "She saved our ass, dude, don't worry. She's not gonna suck your blood."

Naomi shrugged, "Not yet, at least." She walked away, feeling eyes stabbing into her back as she crossed her arms and entered the living room again.

She ran her fingertips over the miscellaneous encumber of paper throughout the room that trailed to the hallway and to the kitchen. They were taped messily, pages flying from the wall and the floor. From Hoppers explanation, she understood that it was a map that Will had had in his mind to figure out where Hopper was when he went missing. Familiar names were labeled with cardboard and a black marker, mapping out recognizable places throughout the small town.

She glanced at the fragile boy on the couch that she had only seen once before, on Halloween night. She remembered him being conscious, lively. Although he still had that frightened aura to him, like he felt like he was never safe.

She heard Mike approaching behind her, and she pivoted to watch him pick up a blue cube, rubber bands encircled around it. It was some kind of mind puzzle. He tossed it in his hand, examining it as he spoke. "Did you know Bob was the original founder of Hawkins AV?"

"Really?" She heard Lucas question from the kitchen.

Mike spun towards them, still holding the cube in his hands, and Naomi neared him. "He petitioned the school to start it and everything. Then he had a fundraiser for the equipment. Mr. Clarke learned everything from him." Naomi knew the kids were part of the AV club as Eleven frequently talked about it, mentioning even that she went there once. "Pretty awesome, right?"

Dustin and Lucas both responded with a effortless "yeah,"

Mike walked over to the dining room table and dropped the cube on it, sighing as his eyes fell to the floor. "We can't let him die in vain."

"We won't," Naomi ensured, moving beside him at the table as she looked at the group. She didn't know the man, didn't even know what he looked at, but she would ensure that he didn't die abortively, no one deserved that.

"What do you want to do, Mike?" Dustin challenged. "The chief's right. We can't stop those demo-dogs on our own."

Naomi made a face.

"Demo-dogs?" Max questioned.

Dustin frowned at her, gesticulating with one hand the word 'Demogorgon' and the other word, 'dogs' then combining them together. "Demo-dogs. It's like a compound. Like a play on words."

"Okay.." Max scrunched a face at him.

Dustin huffed, "I mean when it was just dart, maybe... but it's a whole army now. Did you not hear the part about us at the junkyard?" Dustin's brows lifted, making his cap fall on his forehead slightly. "With superpowers, Naomi only just held off less than a dozen of them."

"Can't fight off an entire army..." Lucas added, adjusting the camo bandana on his forehead.

"Precisely," Dustin furthered.

Mike's face fell, his mind elsewhere as his eyes remained on the table. "His army..." He muttered catatonically.

"What do you mean?" Steve chirped up from the kitchen counter.

His head lifted, and he repeated the same words louder as he glanced around the table. "His army!"

Naomi bit her lip as she shifted her weight, "I'm not getting it, Wheeler."

He faced her, his eyes saucer-like as he spoke passionately. "Maybe if we can stop him... we can stop his army too."

"What..." She hypothesized, "Like go after the main source? The shadow monster's connected to Will, yeah? That's why all this is happening?"

Mike bobbed anticipatedly as he waited for her to finish, before muttering a quick "Ya!" and sprinting down the hallway. He burst through a bedroom door, assumingly Will's, and picked up a picture.

It was a very detailed drawing, only in black. It looked too good for a kid to draw, but it was in Will's room. It was a meticulous sketch of a field. There were different species of trees, and above the tree were telephone wires. The further you looked up, the darker the shade of black got. There was a giant creature leering over the clearing, its legs like spiders and dark clouds enhancing its ethereal quality. She shivered.

"That's the shadow monster?" She snatched the drawing from Mike, examining further as she listened to him ramble.

"It got Will that day in the field."

"What day?" She interrupted.

"It possessed him... he had some sort of seizure at school, saying he saw the monster." He responded hastily. "The doctor said it was like a virus, it infected him."

"And so this virus," Max pondered, "It's connecting him to the tunnels?"

"It's like they're both hosting the same body," Naomi suggested.

"Exactly." Mike nodded fervently, "To the tunnels, to the monsters, to the Upside Down, everything."

"W-Whoa!" Steve gestured with his hands for Mike to stop, "Slow down. Slow down."

Mike tried to compose himself, but he nervously twitched and blinked more times than he should have as he explained to Steve and the rest of them. "Okay, so. The shadow monster's inside everything, and if the vines feel something like pain; then so does Will."

"And so does Dart," Lucas augmented in a tone that told the others he was starting to recognize Mike's rambling.

"Yeah! It's like what Mr. Clarke taught us." HE waited for anyone to respond, but once no one did, he disclosed to them. "The Hive Mind."

Naomi mused over that for a moment, one arm folded across her body while the other bit an already chewed fingernail on her thumb. "Hive mind..." she mulled over, "A unified consciousness or a mind coalescence, like bees. Right?"

"It's a super organism," Dustin appended, watching as Mike spread the paper in front of them on a nearby nightstand.

"This is the thing that controls everything. It's the brain." He pointed to the shadow monster on the picture.

Naomi leaned over his shoulder. "Like queen bee?"

"Mhm," He nodded. "Only ten thousand times more dangerous."

Dustin's face tensed, his lips pursing together as his eyes darted back and forth as he came to a realization. "Like The Mind Flayer." He ran over to the adjacent nightstand, pulling out a stained book with a broken and pilling bind, rushing past them and towards the kitchen. They all followed suit with the same speed and watched as he dropped the book on the table. She watched as Nancy and Jonathon approached, and she could hear Hopper coming up behind her as they all piled around the table, eagerly waiting for Dustin to speak.

He flipped through various pages, sounds of crinkling paper and heaving breaths filling the room, and then snapped once he found what he was looking for. He pointed to the page, and they all leaned in, observing the Dungeons and Dragons Monster manual carried out from Will's room. He pointed at a drawing of a monster named 'The Mind Flayer', its sketch looking nothing like Will's off-putting diagram. It looked almost like a squid, only it was clothed in a long robe.

"What the hell is that?" Hopper folded his arms over, moving towards the small mass.

"It's a monster from an unknown dimension," Dustin decoded, "It's so ancient, that it doesn't even know it's true home." He spoke with such passion that she could really see the boy believing what he was expressing to all them. "It enslaves races from other dimensions by taking over their brains using its highly developed psionic-powers."

"Oh my God," Hopper shoved his hands in his pockets vexingly.

"Not to be a Debbie Downer, Dustin..." She placed her hands on the wooden table, leering towards the boys, "But what makes you think that this actually relates to the Shadow Monster? I mean... Isn't that just D&D?"

"This is a kid's game," Hopper grumbled, his foot stomping against the laminate.

"N-No..." he stuttered, gesticulating to the book. "It's a manual. And it's not for kids." He stabbed a finger at Hopper, his voice rising in frustration, "And unless you know something that we don't," He pointed back to the book, "This is the best metaphor—"

"Analogy," Lucas corrected.

"Analogy," Dustin repeated, glowering at his friend. "That's what you're worried about?! Fine! An analogy for understanding whatever the hell this is," His hands fell back to the book, and he sighed, eyes unmoving from the Mind Flayer.

"Okay!" Nancy interjected, "So this mind flamer thing—"

"Flayer," He said with emphasis, "Mind *Flayer*."

Nancy shook her head, "What does it want?"

"To conquer us, basically. It believes it's the master race."

"Like the Germans," Steve added, with a smirk.

Almost everyone shot Steve a look.

"Uh..." Dustin mumbled, "The Nazis?"

Steve exhaled loudly, feeling embarrassed. "Yeah yeah yeah... The Nazis."

Naomi ran a hand through her hair, shaking her head. He wasn't the brightest boy, but at least he tried.

"Uh... If the Nazis were from another dimension, totally." Dustin carried out. "It views other races, like us, as inferior to itself."

"It wants to spread, take over other dimensions," Mike furthered.

Hopper sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose as he started to pace. His boots scuffed against the laminate, catching Naomi's attention.

"We are talking about the destruction of our world as we know it." Lucas advanced in a serious tone.

Steve slapped the table, pacing away. "That's great! That's great... That's really great. Jesus!"

"Okay..." Naomi picked the book up, analyzing the photo in the manual, and the statistics written next to it. "So if we go after this 'Queen Bee'," She finger quoted, walking around the table to Mike, "And we kill it... does everything else die with it?"

Mike nodded, "We kill everything it controls."

"Or so we think," She challenged, "Right?" She looked at everyone's anxiety-ridden faces, "I mean we don't know for sure if this thing is like the Mind Flayer do we?"

"It's the best shot we've got," Mike shrugged.

She sighed in trounce.

Hopper scuffled over to her, snatching the book from her hands as he read the paragraph next to the Mind Flayer drawing. "Alright. Great. So how do you kill this thing? Shoot it with fireballs or something?"

Dustin chuckled, which felt almost uncomfortable in the fretful atmosphere. "No, No." He laughed, "No fireballs. Uh, you summon an undead army, uh b-because zombies... you know... they don't have

brains." His voice faltered as he saw Hop's anger-infused face, "and the Mind Flayer... it-it likes brains.." He glanced away once he realized how furious he truly looked, and scratched his head nervously. "It's just a game... It's a game."

Hopper slammed the book against the table, "What the hell are we doing...?"

"I thought we were waiting for your military back up!" Dustin tested.

"We are!" he miffed back.

"Even if they come how are they gonna stop this?!" Mike egged back. "You can't just shoot this with guns!"

Hopper glared back angrily. "You don't know that!"

Naomi stood between the two heated bodies, her hands rising as she raised her voice to control the room. "We don't know anything! Okay? We know it's killed nearly everyone in that lab. We know that the monsters are gonna molt and get bigger again, and we know that it's only a matter of time before those tunnels reach this town. Okay?"

"She's right..."

The room stilled as they heard the female voice vocalizing from behind Hopper. Hopper moved aside so they all could see, and they analyzed a frail Joyce Hopper shuffling towards them, a blanket cocooned around her as she wiped her tear-stained face. "We have to kill it." She concluded.

Hopper started towards her.

"I **want** to kill it." She stressed.

"Me too."

"I—"

"Me too," He suspended, "Joyce, okay? Me too. But how do we do that? We don't exactly know what we're dealing with here." His face was pignant and pitying as he leered over her.

"No..." Naomi circled around Hopper, staring at Joyce's face truly for the first time. Her face was read from the tears, and her eyes were puffy from the crying. She watched as the recognition blossomed on Joyce's face from that day in the general store. "But someone does." She continued, turning towards her youngest son on the couch. "If anyone knows how to destroy this thing, it's gotta be him, right?"

Mike pushed pass all of them, starting to march towards his friend. "You're right. He's connected to it. He'll know its weakness."

"I thought we couldn't trust him anymore..." Max paused, "That he's a spy for The Mind Flayer."

"Yeah, but... he can't spy if he doesn't know where he is." He towered over his best friend, staring at him like a foreigner as he laid, his chest lightly rising and falling to a steady rhythm.

"What are you saying?" Naomi neared Mike, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder, to break him from his mystified trance. Whatever idea he was pondering, the gears in his brain were already in works to produce it.

"I'm saying..." He flipped around to her, and Naomi retracted. "We wake him up with an adrenaline shot, only after we've disguised the whole place to make it seem like it's not really Will's house."

"What?" She frowned, "Tipi the whole place with newspaper and what not and black all the light sources?"

He snapped at her, "Exactly. He'll be too confused. We bring Will back, figure out how to target his weakness, and boom."

Naomi licked her lips, spinning on her heel to face the throng.

Their faces all aped each other, hesitant but according glances. "That's so brilliant it just might work, Wheeler." She shrugged. "We need somewhere smaller though. Like a bedroom. We can't do it here, he'll recognize the doorways. He'll probably be able to echolocate that he's in the living room or something."

Mike stood on his tiptoes, another scheme gyrating through his brain again, "I know the perfect place." He raced past her, leaving her hair

whirling around her face as he tugged at Hoper's arm, leading them out the back door through the kitchen.

They all exchanged bamboozled glimpses, Nancy and Jonathon even shrugging at each other. They waited in silence for the two to return, and with her extended hearing she could hear Hopper comment the word 'perfect'.

Hopper returned with a tailing Mike. He clapped his hands together, publicizing to the group like a politician on stage. "Alright, here's the plan. We're gonna put him in the shed, there's a banister we can tie him too. Naomi and I will clean out the shed, place it all out on the back lawn. Dustin, Lucas, you guys find whatever crap you can in the trash to staple the walls with. We need news papers, paper bags, rags, old blankets, towels, cardboard, anything. Nancy and Steve, you guys are gonna help staple, duct tape, and nail every damn thing. To the ceiling, wall, floor; everything. Mike, redhead, you guys are gonna find whatever cleaning and bleach solution you can so we can block out the smell in and around the shed. Got it?"

Everyone was silent for a moment. All Naomi could hear was the beating hearts, and the sounds of the cricket's chirping outside through the open back door. She'd take that over howling demo-dogs anytime though. She nodded to Hopper. "I'm in."

A chorus of "Got it"s and "Yes sir"s broke out, and they all started moving in unison. Shuffling footsteps and squeaky sneakers scuffed the floor as everyone flowed in opposite directions.

She took her place beside Hopper and they strutted down the steps from the back door, over the dewy unkempt grass, and towards the shack. When he stepped in, she paused. She placed her hands on her hips and sighed. There was a lot of crap in there. A table, some chairs. There was a work bench, posters. Frames were scattered everywhere, broken glass. She saw a shotgun and some ammo, which she made a mental note to put aside rather than joining it with the junk pile. A layer of dust coated the entire place.

"I think even with supernatural abilities this is going to take a hell of a long time." She exhaled.

Hoper bumped his shoulder against hers, pushing past her as he made his way to the back of the shed. "Well we don't have much time so you better move your ass, Nosferatu."

She smiled at the familiar nick name, and prompted on.

They worked hastily after that. She could hear noises coming from outside, heard the boys frequently jump cans of trash and bags of garbage in the same pile they placed their clutter. A small mound started to form on the back lawn. There was a lot of chattering going on, multiple conversations occurring, the affairs making it difficult to keep an ear out for the army of demo-dogs.

She moved in a blur, wasting no time and not bothering to hide her abilities with the limited countdown they had.

Nancy and Steve watched in bewilderment, as well as the boys that shuffled through the junk outside, but Hop barely hesitated at her usual ritual of moving swiftly. She tossed miscellaneous pieces of wood, and scrap metal into the mass, which Dustin put aside for Steve and Nancy. Steve nailed while Nancy used the staple gun to attach pieces of scrap fabric and newspaper clippings to the walls.

"Hey," She heard Nancy submit in a attention-catching tone.

Steve lowered himself from the step ladder to turn towards Nancy, raising a brow to urge her to continue.

"What you did, um, helping the kids. That was..." Steve rested his arm along a wooden ledge. "— Really cool." She finished, the corners of her mouth coiled into a respectful smirk.

"Yeah," he replied, moving the ladder and stepping on it again. "Those shits are real trouble, you know?"

Naomi felt like she was forbidden to watch the encounter, but it was hard not to in the confined scope, the only sounds from inside being the rustling of objects and the movement of furniture against the wooden floor.

Nancy turned back to her stapling job, speaking while she pressed it into the wall. "Believe me, I know." She bit her lip, her head

nervously rotating towards Naomi. Naomi didn't avert her eyes, although she was caught spying on them. Nancy gave her a nervous smile. "Thank you, too."

Naomi nodded at her, beaming back.

Nancy was incredibly sweet, and it was apparent why it was hard not to fall in love with the striking girl.

Eventually, the whole crew joined in the cramped shed, stapling, duct taping, hammering. They covered every inch of the place, whilst Mike poured bottles of bleach and cleaner on the floors and around the shed.

It made her nostrils burn, and she flared them as she helped Max place an old towel in front of the door.

The hustle of the room died down as every last piece of wood was covered with scraps of cardboard or varied fragments of paper and plastic.

She placed a hand on each hip, turning to the Chief for direction, as did the rest of the room. "What now?" She vocalized for the rest of the room.

His posture matched hers, his hands pushing back his uniform jacket, and he crooked his head. "Well, we seat the boy and tie him up. Then we do what we can to get information out of him. We're going to have to dig deep, we need raw memories. Some of us should be inside the house on standby to make sure there are no noises or smells interfering."

"Want me to grab Joyce?" I asked.

He nodded, "We're gonna need all the help we can get. Mike, Jonathon, you guys stay with me."

Everyone nodded, and in an unspoken command, everyone removed themselves from the small shed. Jonathon moved past everyone to enter the house first, and Naomi watched as he positioned two arms underneath his tiny brother, lifting him up to bring him outside. He was still dressed in a hospital gown, making him appear much more

delicate.

Naomi tiptoed down the hallway. She ignored the rusty-colored stains of old blood on the carpet and shuffled down to the very last room, listening for Joyce's light whimpers.

She rapped lightly against the door with two fingers, her head pressed against the aged wooden door to listen for a sign of acceptance in her entrance.

She heard her snuffle, followed by a quiet "Come in."

The door creaked ajar with her slow opening, and she gave Joyce a polite smile, trying to conceal the pity she so badly was gifting her after watching her grieve for her lover. "They're ready." She bit her lip, trying to hide the quivering lip. "They're just about to wake Will up."

She nodded, looking away from Naomi as she smacked her lips together. She curled the blanket over her shoulders again, pulling it closer to her face as she scooted closer to the edge of the bed.

Naomi examined the room, regarding the queen bed with two nightstands, the right side heavily used while the left only contained a pair of glasses and untouched sheets. The room was dark, making the atmosphere appear much more gloomier than it really was; and it wasn't just from the night time outside.

Naomi chewed on her gnawed lip, looking down at the lost woman across from her. She knew what she had to do, but she wasn't very good at it. She spun to shut the door, struggling to push it against the carpet, and shut it completely. She scampered over to the edge of the bed, planting her butt a comfortable distance away from her "Are you okay, Joyce?" It was a stupid question to ask. She clearly wasn't. But the words had let her lips before she had time to filter them.

Joyce sucked in a breath, sniffing through a blocked nose. She faced her poignantly, her face still red and raw. She glanced at her through small swollen slits where her eyes should be. She gave her an endearing look, through the small point of view she had.

"You know, I'm not really good at this kinda stuff..." She scratched the crown of her head, her eyes forestalling to the carpet. "I just feel like I need to say this, though... I've been through more broken bones than I can count, I've drowned to death, I've been cut open, stabbed ten's of times, shot at nearly every other day, but that doesn't compare to the strength you have right now, Mrs. Byers." She looked at her with consoling eyes, her lips pressed into a tight line. She tried to read her face as she gazed back at her. She could feel the mitigating being accepted, but she said nothing to prove it. "I know I'm the last person you'd want to talk to, but your feelings are justified and you're more than this situation. Your love for that boy out there is unconditional and out of this world, just like it was for Bob. It should be honored more than it is; but I don't think anyone can express how potent it truly is."

She said nothing, just darted back and forth as she looked from one doe brown eye to the other. Naomi felt like she was being regarded as a zoo creature, the way she watched her; but she said nothing.

"That day in the Melvald's, you were talking about Hopper. It was because you had been living with him, right?"

She nodded, clenching her teeth as she remained deadpan. "I had left the night before."

"What you did," She pushed the blanket over her shoulders, revealing her arms to her like they had been badly damaged and she was a doctor inspecting them, "to me— you took my pain away. Didn't you?"

She nodded again, still inexpressive.

"Thank you."

The room was silent again. It was comfortable, without purpose though. She scooped closer to Joyce and held her hands out, placing them on the comforter. In her mind, it was an offer to repeat the same action. Her hands trembled, frightened what Joyce Byers might think.

"Is it true what they said?" She asked, her hands hovering over

Naomi's.

She locked eyes with Joyce Byers. She saw how lost and hollow they were, how hurt she had been, how much pain she was suffering through. She could see it was years and years of pain: not just tonight's events, or this year's occurrences.

She didn't have to say the word 'vampire'.

Again, she nodded.

Joyce exhaled, her eyes shifting nervously. She hesitated to place her hands in Naomi's but seconds later, she dropped them. Naomi's hands clasped instantaneously, like a Venus fly trap catching prey. She held them gently in her palms, feeling the cold that so similarly matched her temperature.

Joyce's eyes twitched from their joined hands, to her face, watching for any sign of abilities being used. Without taking her pain away, she could feel how much hurt she was enduring in. She couldn't take it all away, it would kill her. She squeezed her hands tighter, shutting her eyes, and focused on relieving the women of as much grieving and tenderness as supernaturally possible.

She could feel herself pulling the nagging pain from Joyce to her, feeling it tingle up her fingertips until it hit her soul. It was dull, sharp, and burning, all at once. Ripples of pain sprouted into her veins. She grunted, bouncing her knee to distract herself.

It was bearable, but uncomfortable.

She absorbed the trauma, swallowing in pain. She felt Joyce squeeze her tighter, and she squeezed back. It was so raw, so real. It was worse than any flesh wound or laceration.

When she took all she could, she released Joyce's hands, wiping the cold sweat off on her jeans and exhaling deeply

Joyce looked at her with tears in her eyes, her mouth quivering as she placed both arms around Naomi's neck. She could feel her body tremble against hers. Naomi slumped into her, feeling the weakness overcome her. It decreased with every passing second, but she just

remained in the hug. She writhed in it, feeling loved for once. It was a good feeling to be loved.

"Thank you..." A hollow whisper breathed into her ear.

A/N: I apologize that this was such a damn filler chapter. The next one will be a bit more exciting. I also apologize for having so much dialogue, I hate copying from the script, but some of it is needed for the information. You'll see Jasper and The Winchesters soon...

Thoughts on today or future chapters?

Thanks for reading!

Lex.

ajahane: Thank you!

gamby004: Again, thank you for your continuous reviews. I think it's normal for her to feel some jealousy, even though it is clear she is with Jonathon! I want them to be acquaintances, as much as possible in the circumstances they are in anyways. I think that is the type of person Nancy is. She's very accepting, as is Naomi. I'm so excited for the reunion ahhhhh! And you can imagine Kalani ;) I might even. Haha!

screemnigcheesepuff: Thanks for another review! Glad you liked it. Definitely will do one shots and a sequel!

16. Chapter 16: The Return

Sorry this is such a short chapter... just felt right to end the chapter where I did.. Enjoy!

he elapsing time crawled by, and they waited patiently; scattered throughout the living room and kitchen. Dustin watched through the kitchen window, his eyes lingering around the shed. Naomi lay with her forehead against the table, her eyes shut lightly as she rested on her folded hands. She eavesdropped every now and again to the conversing inside the shed. Most of it was emotional dialogue, family of Will reminiscing in attempt to bring him back from the Shadow Monster's cruel possession.

Nancy stood with her back to the wall, her arms crossed over her as her eyes twitched at Dustin's movement.

She could hear the passing of wind from the living room, as Steve swung his nailed-bat around in attempt to prepare for whatever war was inevitable in their future.

Lucas and Max sat in the carpeted hallway their backs crinkling against the paper lining the walls. She exhaled loudly, and perked up once she saw Nancy approach her, pulling out a wooden chair to take a seat beside Naomi.

"What are they saying?"

"Same as before," She shrugged. "Jonathon's talking about them making Castle Byers."

Nancy nodded, tucking in the chair as she scooted forward.

"I hope I didn't seem like a total asshole earlier," She hitch hiked a thumb back, while her hand ran down her face. "Like back at the lab."

Naomi sat up from her half-rest on the table. She shook her head in disbelief. "What? No, no. I wasn't thinking that."

She shrugged, her arm pulling her jacket tighter over her shoulder. "It's just complicated—Steve and I. I know that I messed up, and that there's nothing left but I still care for him."

Naomi nodded, "I know," And she did. She could see the way her eyes glistened when she looked at Steve, the way her attention peaked whenever Steve spoke. She could hear her heartbeat race when Steve made a bold action, moved closer to Nancy, or to Naomi. She could sense the attraction between them, too. "There's nothing going on between Steve and I though..." She disregarded, "It's not like that."

She raised a brow, gifting her a polite smirk. "So you two didn't kiss?"

She shot Steve a glare, although he didn't catch it. When had they even gotten the chance to speak about that? She had been with Steve nearly every passing second since she met him.

"What! No—no. It wasn't like that. I was using him to camouflage myself from the hunters. I-It's—" She stuttered.

Nancy shook her head, her arms waving back and forth as she cut her off. "It's none of my business anyways. I just want to make sure you know that I don't hate you or anything."

She nodded, "I don't hate you either, Nancy."

"Good," Nancy tried to conceal her smile as her eyes dropped to the broken laminate beneath them, Nancy's knee bouncing repetitively. "Just in case the opportunity presents itself—"

"I don't like him Nancy." She cut off.

"I know!" She laughed, "But in case it does—I just want you to know that it's A-okay by me."

She gave her an odd look, trying to hide the comical laugh forming in her chest. "Well thanks for your blessing Mrs. Wheeler," She giggled, to which Nancy burst into a soft laughter.

All fell silent in the room again. The only sounds being the air Steve swung at and the two pre-teens chatting in the foyer. Minutes passed, the maddening noise of the ticking clock sounding like it was right

beside both earlobes. She watched as the little hand moved millimeter by millimeter, making its way past 10:00pm, 10:30pm, 11:00pm.

Finally, after a moment of upheaval in the hut, Hopper came sprinting into the house. He pushed past a questioning Dustin, grabbing an old envelope from a bulletin board of the wall. He sat across from Naomi, dropping the paper and slamming a pen onto it while he sat in the chair. She watched as the others filed in, all but Will, and stared curiously and frighteningly at Hopper as he started to scribble on the sheet.

"What happened?" Dustin barked.

She watched as Hopper's mind reeled, observing him as he scribbled against the paper, a few dots, and a line, and some spaces in between. He was drawing Morse code. "I think he's talking..." He drew another few dots, "Just not with words." He wrote the corresponding letters underneath in capitals.

"What is that?" Steve question.

To which Naomi replied, "Morse code." She stood from her seat, leaning over to see what Hopper was writing. She knew Morse code, but her mind tottered too fast in the moment to make out what it was before he had already finished writing it down.

"H- E- R- E..."

"HERE" The younger boys announced all at the same time.

Hopper dropped the pen, his body rotating specifically towards Mike which she found funny. "Will's still in there. He's talking to us." He glanced to all of them "He's tapping his fingers against the pole."

Dustin spun around to Mike, "You gotta grab Will's walkie talkie."

"Why?" Naomi asked, as she watched Mike speed past her and round the corner in a blur.

Lucas' face looked overwhelmed with thoughts, his expression matching Dustin's and Mike before he booked it. "The Chief takes the

walkie and we transcribe everything he sends to us from inside the shed."

"Holy shit that's brilliant," Steve commented, his arms lifting in disbelief.

Mike threw the walkie talkie at Hopper, who wasted no time to run back towards the shack.

"Jonathon let's go!" Joyce squealed

"Wait one second!" His feet scuffed against the floor as she shuffled in the other direction. Naomi watched as he sprinted down the hallway, while the boys ran around for supplies, piling it on the kitchen table.

Jonathon returned moments later, a tape and boom box in hand as he ran out the back door and into the cold night to join the others.

Dustin and Lucas sat in front of Lucas' walkie talkie, sitting it upright as if they could see through the thing. Before them, a blank lined sheet of paper and a pen were neatly lined up, Lucas glancing at a morse code cheat sheet he had stolen from Will's room. She didn't bother to mention that she knew Morse Code, she would just do what she could to speed up time for everyone.

She heard music playing seconds later, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go' by The Clash blaring from the outdoors while the boy's noted down the dot's and line's Hopper fed them through the walkie.

Nancy and Max sat beside her, Nancy with a red crayon in hand and a piece of blank cardboard in front of her. Lucas glanced from the paper, to the group of girls across, shouting the letter 'C' as if they were a mile away from them. The exhilaration in the room was tangible though, they were getting somewhere. Thank God this boy knew Morse code.

Nancy wrote down the letter 'C' in the top left corner.

Seconds later, more beeping. Dot's and line's were scribbled by Dustin, while Lucas translated them through the Morse Code alphabet. 'L', 'O', 'S', 'E'.

Their routine went on like that for a while, Naomi and Max trying to decipher the word like a bad game of hangman while Nancy wrote in large red letters.

"What are they saying?" Max would shake Naomi's arm every time there was a period of silence, no beeping emitting from Hopper's end. She would listen, with her eyes closed as she tried to drown out the stimulated heartbeats. She would hear Mike, Joyce, or Jonathon talking, and she would let the party know.

'G'

'A'

'T'

'E'

Nancy held the slab of cardboard up, analyzing it with her head cocked. The others dropped their supplies, rounding the table to observe it as if it were Mona Lisa or Starry Night.

"CLOSE GATE" They all read in the same confused tone, their heads twitching in confusion as they tried to decipher the code from Will Byers himself.

They all boggled as they jumped at the sudden noise of the phone ringing.

"Shit," Both Dustin and Naomi cursed.

Naomi flew from the table, ignoring Dustin's repetition of the word as she zoomed past him and removed the phone from its hook, then hung it up forcefully again.

"Oh crap," She panted, "Who even calls at this time of night?"

The phone started to blare again, and Nancy took tribute in ripping the phone from the wall and smashing it against the living room's hard wood floor. She watched as the phone scattered to pieces. "Damn," Naomi commented; her eyes wide as she turned back to the others. "Think he heard?"

"It's just a phone," Steve answered, shrugging, "it could be anywhere, right?"

"Hey, hey, are you alright?" She heard from outside.

"It knows," Hopper's heart hammered away she he repeated the words, "It knows where we are."

"Fuck." She turned to the crew, "He knows."

"W-What does that mean?" Steve stuttered. "It's going to come for us?"

She started to pace away, observing the living room for anything they could use as weapons. She could sense the tension rising in the room. Not only the room, but the air. The air seemed thicker, even with the back door allowing cold oxygen through. "I'm not sure," She told Steve. "Everyone find what you can."

Nancy stood from the table, the chair falling back. "They're coming for us, aren't they?"

She paused, her lids fluttering as she closed her eyes and allowed them to roll back into her head. The atmosphere changed after that. She could feel it as her eyes shut completely, her eyeballs darting around furiously as her body stood limp and she sniffed the air. She could smell the rotten stench she was used to with the demodogs, but she could smell the chemo signal. Her fingertips tingled with stimulation in the change of ambiance.

In nature, plants and animals communicated with chemosignals. They could attract potential pollinators or warn others of impending pest attacks.

That was the chemo signal that reeked throughout the air in that moment: The scent of impending doom, the smell of a murderous army on their way as they awaited their impending death. "They're angry," She told the others.

"How the hell do you know that?!" Steve sputtered as he darted past her to grab his bat. He heaved breaths, his whole body moving with his respirations as he took a spot beside her.

Hopper stormed in, grabbing his shotgun from where he left it in the corner of the room. He loaded it, and picked up the other gun doing the same.

"What happened?" Naomi asked, "It was the phone?" Hopper nodded, moving hastily around the room.

"Get away from the windows!" He hissed at the younger ones who were all piled on the sofa, trying to see through the blinds and the thick fog outside.

The rest of the gang piled in. Jonathon moved an unconscious Will to the sofa where they could keep an eye on him. Tape was still stuck to his hands and feet, but not joined together, just ripped messily apart to free him. Joyce locked the door behind them, moving the dining room table against the door, to add for extra comfort.

Naomi mimicked her, fluttering over to the front door to place the chain across and lock the bolt. The room grew into a frenzy. "Grab what you can!" She ordered, the militia scattering throughout the room to grab anything and everything they could possibly use to protect themselves.

She could hear the shrieks and cries coming from the ascending demo-dogs miles away. "They're coming from the north." They all faced the front of the house, standing in a huddle. Naomi looked to Mike, who had a science trophy in his hand. She made a face at him, to which he shrugged. She didn't worry though.

She would die protecting all of them if she had to.

She would die a thousand times if it meant they could all go unscathed, not a single break in the skin for any one of them. She was confident in her strength, she knew she could pull off protecting them for at least a few minutes, with the help of Hopper.

"Do you know how to use this?" Hopper held a black shot gun up to Jonathon's flustered face.

"I-I—"

"Can you use this?!" His booming voice echoed throughout the room.

"I can." Nancy stepped forward.

Hopper tossed the gun towards her. Nancy caught it with both hands, her face turning hard as she positioned it properly in her hands and faced the large bay window at the front of the Byers' house. There was a click of a gun as she removed the safety. Normally, they'd all be flabbergasted by Nancy's bold acceptance of the gun, but nobody spoke a word.

They all mobilized towards the center of the room. She could see them militarize together, their own mini-army forming. She could see the fear beneath all of their eyes, but more importantly she could see the passion they all had to protect Will Byers and each other. One by one they fortified. Steve grabbed his bat, Dustin his slingshot.

Nancy, Hopper, Steve, and her took the first row, everyone else behind them. The room fell silent, the only sound being the squeaking from the rubber band around Lucas' slingshot. Jonathon held his mother, while Max hid behind Lucas.

She didn't want to admit it, but she felt the same as the others. She felt the passion to save Will Byers in her heart, and she felt it so wholly it almost broke her. She would take a wooden stake to the heart for a boy who had barely even been conscious around her. She clenched both fists, her only weapons at this point besides her protruded fangs. She felt the nerves inside her, an unfamiliar feeling to her. She felt the trepidation form inside her soul, the fear of not losing her own life, but someone else losing theirs. She cared for every last one of them.

She glanced to a foreboding Steve. They shared a glance. Naomi's face softened as she swallowed. Her hand cautiously moved to Steve's free one, and she snaked her fingers between his, interlocking their hands together.

He gave her a tight, reassuring squeeze.

And they waited.

There was a loud unison screech of at least a dozen or so demo-dogs from outside, audible to the human ear now.

"Where are they?!" Max muttered.

They could hear them just outside now. It was hard to see through the screen covering the window, and the curtains that covered 3/4ths of it. They heard a loud shriek from the growing demogorgons, all of them tensing up in response. She could hear the crackling of leaves, the prowling footprints of their enemies.

They all waited for the first move.

But it never came.

Instead, the atmosphere changed.

It was as if two auras fought each other. The chemo signals transpired into something less gruesome and something for terrified. The demo dogs took their time stalking the house... but there was a reason. There was a loud thud to the north east portion of the house, and they all let out exasperated cries and shrieks as they moved in uniform.

"What are they doing..." Nancy questioned out of breath.

"I don't know..." Naomi replied.

Steve gave her hand one last squeeze, then removed it to place both white knuckled fists around the handle of the bat. They could see the bushes rustling from the window, and they all watched in confusion.

There was a phlegmy snarl from the front of the house, and they all cried out again, moving again in one motion.

"What the hell..." Naomi whispered under her breath, taking up a firm self-defense stance. She couldn't even read the creatures anymore. Something was just so off... She could hear them scampering around the house, and then a sudden halt. There was a loud groan, and then a gnarly cry from one of the demodogs, like it had been injured.

There was another screech, and then all of a sudden, it came to an abrupt stop; like screeching tires against pavement.

They all waited in silence, hearts hammering, breaths being held; weapons positioned ready.

Without warning, something large burst through the bay window, crashing to the floor with tinkles of glass skittering around it, some shards even falling to their feet. They all screamed, louder than the first two times.

"Holy shit..." Dustin cursed as they all moved in a mass towards the demo-dog laying unconscious (presumably) On the wooden floor. It was surrounded by a broken chair and numerous books from the shelf it knocked into it. Some sort of boney resemblance protruded from its neck.

They waited with gaited breaths for Hopper to move towards it. Naomi took position right behind him, watching him as he kicked its slick head with the heel of his combat boots. It squished, its face petals slithering back, slime coating the floor boards. "It's dead.... I think." She managed to sputter out.

Hopper confirmed with a nod, but didn't lower his gun.

As if they hadn't been startled enough in the past sixty seconds, a low alarming creak sounded from the front door.

They all pivoted in unanimity, their bodies stimulating at the hushed noise.

Hopper and Naomi moved from the back, to the front of the group again. Hopper took the lead, while Naomi Nancy and Steve were directly behind. They all held their breaths as they waited for the next noise.

In an instant, the bolt seemingly unlocked itself.

Nancy and Hopper lifted their guns, their bodies shifting as they closed one eyes; ready to aim.

She watched as the chain moved across the open lever, moving to the very end before removing itself and unlatching. Her first thought was the Winchesters. Her second thought was Jasper. But her third, and final thought, was Eleven.

"Wait!" She moved ahead of them all, pushing both Nancy and Hop's gun down as she took another step forward. She used the butt of her hand to push the barrel so it would aim towards the floor. Hopper was the only one to resist at first, which she expected, but she won in the war of strength, and Hopper succumbed to her wishes.

"Wha—"

She took another step forward, and she waited.

The room grew silent again.

Naomi could feel her body vibrate and buzz with excitement. She could feel the breath caught between her lungs, she could see her body convulse with bafflement in her peripheral. Was her theory right? Could it be her? Disorientation struck her like a knife to the chest as she moved closer to the door.

Hopper grabbed her wrist, but she yanked her arm back, smiling at him.

She could smell her now.

She smelt different than the last time she had seen her, but she could still smell her.

She could smell the strawberry-vanilla scent of her shampoo, she could smell the sweet scent of floral her skin gave off, the warm aura that radiated from her body. She could hear her soft breaths from behind the door. She could hear her beating heart, the one that twitched so familiarly that it couldn't be mistaken. She had lived with that sound for a year, slept by that sound every day for nearly 365 days.

She watched as the door creaked, a pair of white sneakers stepping through. She saw the unevenly placed grey socks pulled up on light washed jeans. She saw the black camisole and the matching shade jacket. The eyeliner and the gelled back hair was a new look for her, but she would take Eleven in any form. She looked bad ass anyways.

She could feel the waterworks already.

She looked back to the others, her eyes locking with Hopper. He watched her face soften, saw the tears in her eyes, and then he knew also.

She turned back to Eleven.

She saw her broken form, her pale skin. She saw the blood that so familiarly dripped from her left nostril. She watched as her weak body shuffled towards Naomi, and then collapsed.

Naomi knelt to the floor.

Eleven wasn't that much shorter than her, but it felt appropriate to do so in the moment. Eleven buckled into her arms, falling limp. Her arms caressed her body, one hand around her waist and the other holding onto her crunchy hair. She turned, watching a beaming Mike, tears falling from his eyes as he approached them.

She didn't need to see Eleven's face to know that it matched Mike's perfectly. She could feel the wetness on her shirt, she could feel her body spasm as she finally saw Mike's face. Young love was a funny thing, something so rarely recognized but Naomi knew in that moment, that Mike and Eleven loved each other.

She could see the way Mike struggled to keep his lips curled up, to keep his knees standing upright. She could smell the chemo signals from El; the pure bliss radiating from her.

She gave Eleven one last tight squeeze, then steadied her to go see Mike Wheeler, the boy she had waited 353 days to see, the boy she had listened to every night, the boy she never shut up about, the boy she irrevocably, and whole heartedly loved.

"Eleven..." Mike's voice was broken as he neared her, limbs still wobbly.

Eleven matched his demeanor. She gave him a broken smile, one that spoke a thousand words in under one second, it was one that rocked you to your core. The blood dripped from her nose, onto her lips, but she ignored it. Instead, she just gazed at the boy in front of her, not taking her eyes off of him as if someone would snatch him up the

second she blinked.

"Mike..."

A/N: Thanks again for all the reviews I really enjoy reading them!

Love,

Lex

Elizi02: Honestly the reason i changed their first names in this story was because I felt bad pinning the real winchesters as mean haha. Thanks so much for reading!

MoonStars: Thanks! Hope you enjoyed this one

ajahane: Enjoy this one!

ScreemnigCheesepuff: THank you for your continous reviews always! I was so torn between who to go first... So I kinda made it so she had to see Naomi first because she was the first at the door lol! Next chapter will be big in terms of Jasper and the Winchesters! I'm so glad you loved it and I always look forward to reading your thoughts so thank you.

gamby004: I'm so glad you think so! I'm glad you agree! Also yes. I am so down to do that, I'll add it for you!

17. Chapter 17: Reunited

"Mike."

"Eleven."

Like the wind had been knocked out of her, she gasped his name one more time.

They embraced for what seemed like an eternity; Mike disregarding the crimson red that dripped from her nose to his shirt. Their clothes scratched against each other, their breathing the only sounds in the room. Witnessing them felt fortuitous. Their passion for each other was so whole. She felt like crying just looking at them.

Their bodies rocked side to side from the intensity of the embrace, and Eleven fisted the back of Mike's sweater, struggling to find her breath again.

"I n ever gave up on you," Mike didn't let go of her as he leaned back to ensure his words didn't get lost in her clothes. "I called you every night." He was smiling now. "Every night f."

"For 353 days," She finished for him, shaking her head side to side. "I heard."

Mike's eyes widened, not quite in pain, nor betrayal, but confusion. His words fell into a disorderly jumble "Why didn't you tell me you were there?" His eyes scanned her face, looking for any sign of elucidation.

Her jaw clenched, her knees strengthening and just as her lips parted to answer, someone cut her off.

A tornado of emotions gyrated throughout the room from then. Eleven scowled painfully by Mike's side, watching as Hopper approached, gun still in hand. Mike moved away from him in shock. His jaw went agape, his lips parting. It was clear he understood from then. His eyes moved from Eleven, to Hopper, to Naomi, and back to Eleven. How could he accept that? El had been here the whole time?

His El? And no one had told him...?

"The hell is this? Where have you been?" His eyes did a one-over of her pop-punk attire.

"Where have *you* been?" She challenged, her brows furrowing as she struggled to look up at him. He moved his free arm to give her a tight hug, and Naomi was pretty sure she was the only one to catch the small peck he planted on the crown of her head.

"You've been hiding her..." It clicked for Mike, then. He saw the two of them embracing, the way Eleven curled comfortably into his side and the way Hopper's face stayed put upon her head. It was much more comfortable than two people who met only a handful of times would've been. "You... You've been hiding her this while time!" He pushed Hopper from behind.

"Hey.."

Mike lunged for him again. Naomi flew around them, grabbing Mike from behind and wrapping an arm around his torso to pull him away. He started grunting, growling and clawing at her.

"Hey!" Hopper turned, leering towards him as he fisted the middle of his shirt. "Let's talk." Mike grunted, sneering at him with pure rage still. His eyes peered over at Eleven and Hopper cut him off again. "Alone."

Naomi released a struggling Mike, watching as Hopper placed a hand to the fore of his back as he lead him down the hall. Joyce nodded towards the first room available, and Hopper pulled Mike into it. Naomi's eyes drifted back to Eleven. She looked uncomfortable as she shoved her hands into her jacket pockets. She inhaled deeply, then turned towards her friends.

"We missed you," Both Dustin and Lucas pulled her into a tight embrace, her head between their shoulders. They rested peacefully in each others arms for a moment.

"I missed you, too." She answered, a small half-smile creeping on her lips.

"We talked about you almost everyday," Dustin explained to her as they all moved back from each other. He flashed her a wide grin, his eyes grew, hers faded and she leaned towards him, her arm outstretched as she stuck a finger in his mouth. Dustin swatted her away.

"Teeth," she announced.

"What?"

"You have teeth." She clarified.

"Oh," He smiled, sharing a laugh with Lucas. "You like these pearls?" He rolled his tongue, raising his eyebrows at her, to which Eleven went bug-eyed at, then frowned.

Naomi snorted from behind Dustin.

"Hey," He barked at her, frowning jokingly.

Naomi rested against the back wall, her arms crossed over one another as she observed Eleven. Eleven recognized the interaction between Dustin and Naomi, figuring out that they had met officially, maybe even started a friendship and her lips softened at the synergy.

"Hey, um, I'm Max." The ginger pushed her way through into the circle and left out an open hand for Eleven to shake. "I've heard a lot about you." She even caught a hint of a smile on Max's pert lips. Eleven blinked a few times, before pushing between Max and Lucas, neglectfully pushing her arm out of the way.

Max looked to Lucas for answers, but he just shrugged.

While Eleven finished her other greetings, Naomi joined Max, Lucas and Dustin. "She just takes a bit to warm up, I promise." She assured Max, "The girls got trust issues, rightly so." Max nodded, but she could see how sad the girl actually was. Naomi patted her shoulder, smiling at her. Naomi knew the real reason for Eleven's dismissive behavior, though. She was jealous from the day in the school. Naomi would speak with her later, if Eleven would even speak to her after abandoning her.

She took back her place on the wall, closing her eyes as she listened

to a screaming Mike.

"YOU LIED! YOU LIAR! LIAR! LIAR!"

"I'm sorry kid!"

The whole conversation mostly continued like that. Mike barked, screaming and raging at Hopper, while Hopper took the brute of it.

"-don't blame her."

"I don't blame her! I blame you! I blame you!" She could feel wholeheartedly the anger resonating from the room they were in. Mike let out a million swear words, she heard the scuffling of fight and Hoppers grunts in attempt to hold the boy off as well. *"I blame you! You liar!"*

She felt fingertips lightly graze over her folded hands, and her lids fluttered open to see Eleven. Everyone else dispersed into other conversations, and now that Eleven had said her hello's, she came back to speak with Naomi. She could feel everyone's eyes on them, despite the conversations going on. It came to everyone's realization that the three of them, Hop, El, and Naomi had; in fact, been roommates for the last year. It didn't need to be said, everyone had put two and two (or rather three) together.

Eleven moved closer to her, pulling her from the wall via their interlinked fingers, and she wrapped her free hand around Naomi's back.

Naomi closed the space between them. She caressed her closely and pressed her lips to Eleven's gelled back hair. This girl had saved her life this time last year. After everything she had seen about Naomi, she never once appeared scared of her, never once turned her back on her, never once abandoned her. Whether it was the right choice or not, Naomi had done that to Eleven.

She turned her head, pressing her cheek atop Eleven's head. "I wasn't sure if you'd be mad." She murmured, her voice muffled slightly from the way her cheeks squished together.

"Never." She muttered back.

"Or if you had gotten my note-"

"Yes." She cut off. "Your promise."

Naomi nodded, feeling the tears well up.

"You kept your promise."

Naomi nodded again, ignoring the stray tears that spilt over, trailing along her structured cheek bones before soaking into Eleven's locks.

"Are you leaving again?" She asked, her voice cracking lightly.

"No," Naomi shook her head, "No not again."

"Good." Eleven relaxed into her after hearing her answer. "I don't know what I'd do without you." She whispered, her voice barely a hush, even in the quiet room. They all watched the two now, analyzing how close they were. Naomi shut her eyes, though. She ignored the others and let the rest of the tears pour over. She released Eleven and her's clasped hands, and brought her other arm around to hug her. She snuggled her even tighter, to which Eleven responded by squeezing her even tighter. They stayed like that for a while. She was still, her heart beating against Naomi's chest; as if they were one. The commotion had died down from Mike and Hop, all she heard was Mike's weeping for the girl that was currently in her own arms, and Hopper's reassuring words.

"You left because of Mama, right?"

Despite her slim vocabulary, the girl was smart. She should've known she would figure out about Terry Ives survival. Naomi pulled back from the girl, facing her as well. She was surprised to see the salty tears staining Eleven's eyes as well, the black eye shadow smudging underneath, making her look like a raccoon. Naomi used her thumb to wipe some of it away as she spoke; a total Mom move, but she didn't care in this moment. "I left because of your Mama, because of you and Hopper's safety, and because I felt guilt."

"Guilt?" Her brows knitted every so slightly.

"It's what you feel when you do something wrong. You feel bad." She

explained.

She frowned, "What did you do wrong?" She exhaled loudly. "Did I do wrong?"

"No," she shook her head, tugging a strand behind her ear. "No not you, Eleven." She licked her lips. "I feel guilt for a lot of things. I feel it for keeping you inside the cabin, I feel it for hurting people before I met you, I feel it for hurting Hopper. For not deserving the two of you, or anyone else in this room for that matter."

"You hurt Hopper?"

She looped her hand back in Eleven's, "Not physically no; but emotionally." They quieted as Hopper and Mike exited the room. It was clear that Mike had been crying, but he did his best to cover it up with stomping feet and a grimace. He trudged over to Eleven, taking Naomi's spot.

She knew that Hopper had caught the last of their conversation, because he sent her a gentle smile; and Hop didn't do that often. Especially not to her.

"And you too?" Mike asked, implying that Naomi had been living with them as well. "You were all roommates in your happy little cabin?"

Naomi nodded.

Eleven gave Mike tight squeeze on his bicep before removing herself and approaching Joyce. "Can I see him?"

Joyce led her down the hall to see the unconscious boy, and Naomi turned back to Mike.

"Did she talk about me lots?" Mike asked, initiating the only real conversation they had possibly ever had in the last few hours together (scaring the bejeezus out of him didn't count).

"Only everyday," She retorted.

Mike nodded. "Does she... Does she know what you are?"

Naomi nodded again, "I don't think she quite understands, though."

"Yeah..." Mike trailed off, his eyes falling to the floor. "She always had trouble keeping up when I explained to her about Star Wars, or the X-men."

Naomi gave him a crooked smile. "You know, she wasn't lying, right?"

"What do you mean?"

"Every single night she would take that damn television in her room. She would place the blind fold over her eyes, channel surf until she found static, and then she just listened. For three hundred and fifty-three freaking days she would listen to your calls. Sometimes she accidentally brought me with her. Oh, and the ghost costume, on Halloween. That was her. She begged me to let her go, like it was her last dying wish."

"With the coffee crisp?" His eyes started to glisten again as he smiled, joy spreading throughout his face.

"Yeah," She nodded. "We visited you once more at the school. It wasn't too long ago it-"

"I think I know when," He nodded, his eyes drifting to a chatty Max across the room.

Naomi nodded. She sighed after a moment of silence. "Look, I'm not asking you to ease up on Hopper because I know damn well how much it hurts to lose that girl in there," She pointed to the back room where Joyce, Will, and El were. "I'm not asking you to be happy with him, or even cool with him, I just want to ask you if you'd try to understand. To understand that you aren't the only one who loves her-" Mike smiled at that part, "To understand that he put everything on the line to protect her. He was too scared to chance her getting found out. What if you told Dustin by accident? Dustin told Lucas? Lucas told Max and Max told someone else? How could you know she was there and not visit her? What if someone had followed you while you walked to the cabin?" He was nodding a long with her now, "She saved my damn life, her and Hopper. She was too special to be outside." She paused, biting her lip. "I don't know you Mike, but from

this past year I feel like I do. I could tell you that I know you went as Venkman for Halloween, or that Max has the high score in Dig Dug. I could say how I know that you have a baby sister Holly at home, and a father you wished was more involved in your life; or that you asked El to the snowball last year and it broke her damn heart that she didn't get to go."

"Yeah.." He breathed out, looking away from her as a finger swiped underneath his eye.

"I guess my point is; at a time like this I want us to all work together, to be the people that both El and Will need right now."

He nodded, his lip quirking up slightly. "Mhm."

"Agreed?" She asked.

"1000x yes."

She was surprised when the weary boy took a cautious step towards her. He gave her a quick embrace, and then darted around her back to his friends.

She breathed in a sigh of relief. It felt good, now. It felt almost, (emphasis on almost) okay... No more secrets between everyone. No more fighting, atleast for the moment. It was like a breath of fresh air; like someone had been stepping on all their chests for the past year, increasing the pressure the last few days, and all of a sudden; decided to let go.

It felt good.

But now, they had to prepare for battle. And man... was she scared as hell.

A/N: I'M BAAAAAAAACKKKKKKKKKKKKK

pls review it helps me write more lol.

18. Chapter 18: Hope is a Dangerous Thing

Her eyes had drifted to the living room window, the cold breeze blowing through the broken glass. In the background, she heard her cohorts discussing The Mind Flayer and how to rid it without destroying Will Byers as well. Her eyes remained on the broken bay window, observing as the mist outside spiraled with the small breeze. The blanket of white hung over the gravel driveway, and she saw it stir every so often from the movement of the trees with the wind.

"Naomi," Her name stirred her from her daze.

"Hmm?"

"I said are you listening," Hopper's voice was astringent. His palms were pressed against the round dining table, leaning across to her. "We have to get in there."

"The lab?" She asked.

"Jesus- yes. Yes the lab. Are you paying attention?"

She rolled her eyes.

"I can do it." In unison, everyone's head turned to the psionic girl at the end of the table, the one with her hands in her pockets and her brows hanging over her eyes, showing inexorable certainty.

She was surprised to see Hopper step back from the table and share a look with Mike. Mike's expression was unreadable, she couldn't tell if eh approved or not; but Hopper's was quite obvious. He was never good at hiding his emotions. "You're not hearing me."

"I hear you," She bantered without hesitating. "I can do it."

Hopper sighed deeply through both nostrils.

Naomi bit her lip, watching as Hopper's eyes poured into his adopted daughter.

"I think she's right," Naomi spoke up. She hated to admit it, and she'd

rather be in bed hugging Eleven all night, protecting her from all that was evil in the world. She would prefer to watch scary movies all night, watch Eleven eat Eggo's, catch up on the past three days. She would've given anything to take her place, but the difference between her and Hopper in that moment was that she saw the truth. Eleven had opened the gate, and she was the only who could close it. "Hop-"

"No." He cut her.

"Even if El can, there's still another problem," Mike interjected. "If the brain dies, the body dies." He slapped one fisted hand into the air, slamming it into his other palm to further demonstrate.

She could see Max, who was beside her, shake her head in confusion. "I thought that was the whole point."

"It is, but..." Mike tossed his dark curls aside, "If we're really right about this, I mean- if El closes the gate and kills The Mind Flayer's army-"

"Will's apart of that army," Lucas blinked in realization.

"Closing the gate will kill him." He confirmed with a nod.

They all quieted, the only noise their working lungs (and to the supernatural- their beating hearts). It was hard to just sit and wait. It was difficult to just ponder and think about what on earth they could do, how the hell could save everyone? It seemed almost impossible for everyone to make it out alive, and that scared the hell out of them all.

"Joyce, what is it?" Naomi asked, observing the blank stare she gave everyone as her mind drifted elsewhere. "Mrs. Byers-"

"He likes it cold." She stated. Her eyes broke from their trance, and they fluttered up to Naomi. "Cold." She repeated, her eyes drifting to the others. She slid back in her chair, the wooden legs scraping obnoxiously against the laminate, and she started down the hallway towards Will's room. Everyone followed in a hurry, and they all piled into the chilly room. "That's what Will kept saying to me," She nodded to herself, muttering under her breath. She moved towards

the window, slamming it shut.

In her peripheral, Naomi thought she saw Will's tiny body twitch, as if the sever from the freezing temperature was instant to the host inside of him.

"W-we keep giving it what it wants..." Joyce stammered,

Nancy bit her lip, her eyes falling atop Will's fragile coma-like state. "If this is a virus, and Will's the host, then..."

"Then we need to make the host uninhabitable," Jonathon finished for her.

"So if he like it cold-"

"We need to burn it out of him." Joyce struggled to spit the words out. She shifted uncomfortable, her eyes focused only on her son. She gazed at him as if there was no one else was in the room. It was obvious to the keen eye that Joyce knew what had to be done to her baby boy in order to save him from the horrible demon that inhabited his body.

"We have to do it somewhere he doesn't know this time," Mike stated.

"Yeah," Dustin agreed, "Somewhere far away."

Naomi licked her lips. She struggled to let her eyes peel from Will, but when she did, she knew exactly who she was going to look at next. Unsurprisingly, Hopper's eyes were already on her's. They both knew the perfect place to do it. Somewhere where no one could see them, hear them. Somewhere with a fireplace, and plenty of heaters. Where else but a winter cabin dead in the middle of Hawkins Preserve?

The chief nodded at her, and she nodded back.

"Joyce, Jonathon, you take Will. El and I will head back to the lab." She could feel the pace in the room quicken, as if suddenly everything burst into action. They were preparing for war, and everyone stirred uncomfortably in the room, because they all felt it as well. "Dustin, how many of those walkie-talkies you guys got?"

"A few." He pulled one from Will's night stand, "Why?"

Hopper took the heavily loved communication device from his hand and tossed it at Jonathon, who reluctantly caught it despite the lack of warning. "Channel 10. You tell me when you're there. Got it?"

"Where exactly is 'there'?" He asked.

Hopper wasted no in explaining. He removed the sedated boy from his place of slumber, making sure to bring all his quilts and comforters up with him (even the thinner sheets). He tossed him over his shoulder, carrying him fireman style. Joyce buzzed to alacrity, grabbing her car keys and wallet from the other room. Jonathon followed them and everyone filed out of the room, waiting in the entrance way of the Byers' home. Naomi opened the door for Hopper, and immediately behind Jim were all the cognizant and able-walking Byers'.

"Take Denfield, and then you'll see a large oak tree. You're gonna swing a right, and that road is gonna dead-end. It's about a five minute walk from there."

"Head West," Naomi added. "There's not really a path. It's overgrown. Be careful of the trip wire just before the cabin too." She leaped down the front porch steps, skipping a step or too, and watched as Hopper loaded Will's body inside the back seat of Joyce's vehicle. "Should I go with them?"

"No," He shook his head, shutting the door after placing a seat belt around Will. "No we need you."

"We'll find it." Jonathon panted. "Denfield, oak tree, swing a right. That's it, right? Channel 10?"

"It's channel 10, yeah. Listen," Hopper placed an arm over Jonathon's shoulder. "You let me know when that thing is out of him." He patted Jonathon's arm in a manner of good luck, and trudged hastily back up the porch steps. Nancy trotted down them immediately after, and Joyce followed closely behind.

Naomi remained still for a moment, watching everyone blow up into

a separate crisis's. Nancy pulled Jonathon aside, whispering something to him that Naomi didn't catch, and then turned to Steve. "Steve, can you help me find the heaters that were pulled out of the shed?"

"Yeah," Steve removed his hands from his hips and nodded, "Yeah I can." They ran off around the house, and Naomi peered back around to find the others. Max and Lucas conversed to one another with concerned expressions plastering both their faces. Hopper lined up his guns and ammunition on the table, Mike and Eleven were muttering sweet nothings, Mike's hand lovingly caressing the shoulder of her jacket, and Dustin... Well Dustin looked just as lost as she did.

They remained in a state of shock for a long moment. Nancy came back around the house with Steve, three rusty-looking heat dishes in their arms. They piled them into the trunk, and in the blink of an eye, Jonathon, Joyce, and surprisingly Nancy, all sped off into night. The only thing left was a sheet of white left spiraling behind them, blanketing the gravel road as it settled again.

She pivoted, spinning around to face the others after she closed the front door. "So what now?"

"We'll give them a few minutes. The cabin's a lot farther away than the Lab. Give them some time before we get there. We need to make sure that things out of him before we close the gate," his eyes drifted protectively back over to Eleven. He watched over like a true father would for their daughter. Normally, it would warm her heart but at a time like this she didn't have the time to google over it.

They waited with gated breaths for Hopper's 'ok'. Dustin paced back and forth. His sneakers crinkled against the paper and tape underneath him; sounding like nails on a chalkboard after a lengthy amount of time, but no one encouraged him to halt. Steve and Max slumped over each armrest of the old couch facing across the window. Mike and El were chatting again, and Naomi did her best not to eavesdrop. She couldn't really read Hop. Her best guess was that he was currently in a state of fear. She had never seen him scared before, but she thought this might be it.

The revving of an engine in a distant sent everyone into a quiet frenzy.

"What the..." Steve muttered, sitting up from his spot on the sofa.

The engine's noise started to resonate as it got closer. She could feel the house vibrate slightly as it advanced with each silent second. Steve turned around to peer out the broken window. The headlights of the car bounced up and down on the gravel road with every unfilled pothole being hit, causing Steve to shy away and shield his eyes from the brilliance, then finally; it settled.

"Steve what is it." Mike sputtered out, removing himself from Eleven's side.

"A car."

"No shit-"

Steve cut him off with a finger, his eyes still enraptured on the vehicle outside. The lights seemed to ricochet off the shards of glass that still outlined the living room window. Steve's lips parted, and Naomi watched him as she listened to the noise outside. She heard one car door open, then the other, and then she heard them both shut in unison.

Steve's brows furrowed in concern as he dropped his finger. "Shit.." he cursed under his breath, before gazing right at Naomi. "Naomi..." he breathed. He delivered her name like he had just told her she had stage 4 cancer.

She already knew, though. She already knew who was behind those doors without even being able to see. She had memorized every sputter of that car's engine, every creak the door made upon opening. She had even retained the specific footstep rhythm of each person in said vehicle. She had spent a hell of a long time running from them, she was all too familiar to everything that they had to offer.

She gnawed at her lip, giving Steve only a small nod as she blinked back the tears forming in her eyes.

Not this time, no. She was done running. No more Winchesters. She

knew facing them was like facing an army of demo-dogs in her mind. A coven of vampires couldn't conquer them, but maybe she could; now that she was ready. Maybe, just maybe, with the help of her friends and family she could end this goose chase.

For the first time that night, she had hope.

A/N: okay, real talk. Do I make Naomi go with Hop and El? Or stay behind with the kids. i had this badass scene played out in my mind of Naomi scaring off Billy, but then as I wrote this it made sense to send Naomi with El and Hopper for protection in the lab. Idk... what do you think?

Sorry for another short chapter... the next will be long!

gamby004: Glad you're still reading! I always did/continue to look forward to your reviews!

MoonStars: Thanks for stickin around!

Thanks for reading!

LEX

19. Chapter 19: Dangerous Game

"Hopper! Hopper... Stop. Hopper." She had her hands to Hopper's chest, walking backwards as she tried to keep the man from interfering. He had a shotgun in one hand; holding it by the middle of the gun while he stormed out of the Byers' house. "Hop."

Hopper ignored her, continuing to trudge towards the two men leaning on their muscle car.

"Hop!" She yelled, pushing him square in the chest as they reached the driveway. Her strength was enough to pull him from his angry stupor, and they stared at each other for a long moment. "Hop, listen to me." His attention was piques at her soft pleads.

"This is private property!" He hollered over her shoulder, making one of the brothers scoff. "You better remove yourself from the premises or you'll be forced too."

"Don't you think you have more pressing matters to deal with, chief?" Sebastian stood from the driver's side door and started towards him. Naomi didn't even want to know how he knew about the demo-dogs, but there wasn't anytime to question it.

She grabbed Hopper's bicep as he went to move again and he finally looked down at her. He looked at her longingly, like a father would to a daughter. "Hop, this is my battle." She assured him, with a tender smile "My battle."

"I'm not gonna let them do what they did to you last time." He used his free hand to pinch the bridge of his nose, sighing as he did so.

"You better listen to her, chief." James hollered.

He didn't budge, even as Naomi nudged him. He stood, his vexed gaze fixed on the two older men who appeared too unceremonious at his authoritative tone.

"You know, you may think you love her like family, but you don't." Sebastian started.

"You don't know shit!" He screamed, stabbing a finger at them as spit flew from his mouth.

"Just think," Sebastian continued, "five years pass... ten years. She's still the same age and what- you're stuck still stealing blood bags from Hawkins Memorial? What if she snaps?" They weren't wrong, and Hopper and Naomi both knew that.

"SH-"

"Hopper." She tugged at him again, gaining his attention. "My battle. Okay? Go inside."

"If they lay one hand on you..."

"Go," She repeated, patting him on the shoulder as she pushed him in the other direction. She couldn't help peel the smile from her lips. made her happy to see others standing up for her, supporting her. Luckily, he obliged; not happily though. He spat at the ground, kicking his boot in the dirt like a toddler throwing a tantrum, and he pivoted to make his way back up the porch steps. The others waited patiently, watching the commotion from the broken window and the front door.

She waited till she saw Hopper close the door, and once she heard the click of the handle, she turned around, facing the two hunters. They had never met face to face like this, without the use of wooden stakes or fangs. "To what do I owe the pleasure?" The sarcasm was very tangible in her voice. She kicked the gravel as she walked, hands settled in her back pockets of her dark jeans.

"We've come to make a proposal." James offered.

"Something tells me I'm not going to like it." She murmured, making sure to stop a few feet from the boys to keep her distance.

"Tsk tsK tsK." James shook his head as he came around the vehicle, standing in front of the vehicle's headlights with her. "Don't be so quick to judge, Ms. Cross."

"Eat shit," She spat at him, literally. He was a little too close for comfort, so she shuffled back a few steps.

"Hear us out," James clenched his jaw. "You help us find Jasper, we let you live."

"For now," Sebastian added with a tongue click.

"I don't know where he is." She growled, her brows furrowing in displeasure at the aforementioned of her coven leader's name.

She didn't let the relaxed posture that Sebastian slipped into fool her. He leaned against the hood, crossing one leg over the other. "We have reason to believe he's not far from Hawkins."

The feeling that washed over her was pure fear. She felt her knees start to buckle and her palms start to sweat. Her teeth gritted together, so tightly she thought they might break. Her fists clenched together and she swallowed. Hard. "I don't know where he is."

"But he'll look for you. Isn't that right?" Sebastian questioned, his brows creeping up on his forehead, "He's sort of the alpha vampire, isn't he? That's why he has compulsion... why he has so many damn covens all over the world. He's an original. Isn't that correct" She ignored the mention of compulsion. It was something she tried to ignore. She knew that the Original Vampire had more powers than the regular vampire. The elderly vampires, as well as some Sirens and occasionally witches, had the power to control the mind of a mortal simply through eye contact. They had the ability to erase memory or even completely alter it.

She could feel the crescent wounds start to form as she pressed her nails deeper into her palms. She nodded.

Sebastian nodded in gratification to her response. "He'll come for you. Eventually."

She heard the creak of a wooden plank behind them, and she turned her head to see everyone piled onto the front patio. Hopper shot her a perplexed look, no doubt eavesdropping on the conversation. She turned back to the hunters.

"Yes," She whispered under her breath.

"Which means that we can go after him."

She shook her head, tears forming in her eyes as she swallowed a ball of saliva. Her despondent eyes shot towards him indignantly. "You can't kill him."

"I th-"

"You can't," She cut off angrily. "He's too strong." If there was anyone that had a chance against him, it was these two. But she knew... deep down in her heart; not even the two best hunters in possibly the whole world could take down Jasper Montgomery. "Be my guest," She added, "I'll start digging your graves now."

They shared a look at each other, their bodies tensing up.

"I assume that your answer is a no, to our proposal?" James inquired, a brow cocked.

She licked her lips, her eyes scrutinizing the aged faces of the two hunters. These guys had literally taken every last momentum she had every had. They had slaughtered every last member of her coven, even those she had grown to love during her forced transition. They had chased her since the second she had been re-born. She had hid out in that damn cabin just to avoid the two and they were still here, waiting for her like a hunter would a prey. She was done running from them, though. She was done stepping outside and wondering if the Winchester's would track her every last footprint. She was done with all of it.

"Trust me, it is tempting, but I'm going to have to decline." She riposted.

The second the words left her lips, the gun was cocked towards her, wooden bullets loaded. She crossed her arms, appearing unprovoked by their lethal measures.

"It's a shame, really." Sebastian rounded the vehicle as well, nearing her leisurely. "Would've been fun to road trip the country with you. You're a pretty little thing," just as his hands lifted to touch her face, she hissed and grabbed it. In a flash, she grabbed the man's wrist, holding it tightly between her strong fingers. his jaw went agape from the immense pressure, and she could see him struggling. It was

nice to see him flounder beneath her grasp, it brought her satisfaction. "It's like you didn't learn the first time or something," She shrugged, laughing as she rolled her eyes.

"Let him go or this bullet goes right through your head," James muttered from behind a shot gun.

She heard the click of another gun, and saw Hopper appear behind James, "Let her go or this bullet goes right through *your* head."

"You wouldn't," He challenged, eyeing Hopper from a side glance.

"Two man prey on a young adult? They jump her out of know where in the middle of a cold Friday night?" he looks around, gesturing to the aforementioned temperature, "One that so happens to be living with the Chief of police? Ya. I think I would. Now drop your damn weapon."

She smirked, which practically sent steam flowing out of James' ears.

His jaw clenched, and she watched the scene spiral out of control from there. He leisurely dropped his weapon, but hastily leaned down toward his boot and pulled out a switch blade. He spun around at the same time he sent the metal sailing toward Naomi. In a flash of movement, he pivoted and used Hopper's gun as some sort of baton to fight for power. They both held it horizontally, using the side of the gun to ram it into each other's faces. Meantime, Naomi pulled the blade from her neck. With her free hand, she held it over the gushing wound, knowing it would stop in a few moments if she let it heal. She twisted the mans arm, releasing her bloody hand for a moment to push down on his elbow. He submissively knelt down, but she kept the pressure on his elbow and pushed it until he was near screaming, then finally, she snapped his arm. The sickening crunch seemed to echo in both their ears, despite being outdoors.

She pushed him to the ground to recuperate and used her aided time to tear the bottom half of her sweater, wrapping it tightly around her neck to stop the fountain of blood that was inconveniencing her. She could hear Hopper and James still scuffling in the foreground. Sebastian got up on his free arm and pulled a pistol from his belt. He pulled the safety off of it, and his index finger moved to the trigger.

Before he could press it, a small rock nailed him in the side of his head. She turned around to see where it had come from, and she saw Lucas behind his slingshot, smiling menacingly as Dustin and Max cheered for him.

She saw Steve inside the house, running to get his spiked bat.

She turned back to Sebastian, but he was nowhere to be found. Instead, she heard the tinkling of glass and observed the aftermath of the hunter being thrown into the windshield.

"Ya El!" She heard Mike cheer.

She heard a distressed bullet go off, and gasped. She sped over to Hopper, ready to aid him. James pushed the side of the gun into his neck, cutting his oxygen supply off. Hopper struggled to pull it off, and his finger was held tightly to the trigger in an awkward position.

She strutted forward, grabbing the hunter by the neck, and threw him off of Hopper. Hop struggled to catch his breath, coughing and grasping at his neck. He picked up the gun, and shot a warning bullet into the air. "Get the hell off this property before I shoot the both of you." But that didn't stop them. It caused a flurry of mist to spiral around, but that was the only thing that had dispersed.

Sebastian clotheslined Naomi, pulling her to the ground with him. They struggled, tossing and turning as they threw punches in one another. Naomi hissed at him, fangs bared. "LEECH," He screamed back at her.

Out of nowhere, he flew off of her. Like a ghost had pulled him and thrown him a few yards. It was like the day in the forest a year ago. She smiled at Eleven, who was already smirking as she wiped the blood from her nose with her jacket sleeve. Mike, in some effort to help, threw a trophy at Sebastian. It was off by a long shot, and the power wasn't really there, but it did tap his broken arm, causing him to grown and writhe on the floor a little more.

Naomi sped over to him, and stood over him with a menacing glare. "You heard the chief," She growled.

Sebastian army crawled backwards, using his good arm to shield the rocks being pelted at him and to help aid his legs in crawling backwards as Naomi stomped towards him.

"Get. Off. This. Property."

It was good to have them feeling scared. It was good to see them under her control. With the help of her friends and family, she had this under control.

She heard a yelp from James, and saw that Steve had swung his nailed bat into James's left calf. The strong scent of blood drifted to her nostrils as he pulled his bloody weapon back, ready for another swing.

Naomi, in a dire last attempt to rid the hunters from her forever, grabbed Sebastian's collar. She lifted the man up by his plaid shirt and brown leather jacket. Her red eyes gazed into his hollow, bleak, loveless green eyes, and she frowned. They had never been so wrong about Naomi. They had always told her that she was loveless, that she was just a leech. She was someone meant to be killed, someone who should've been hunted. She thought about the word; loveless. She looked to her friends, watching their smiling faces as they cheered for each other, supporting supporting one another in their fight to save her. To help her. How could she be loveless? They had been so, **so** , wrong.

She bit into her wrist, drawing blood from her forearm. She used her thumb and pointer finger to force open Sebastian's jaw; much like Jasper had done to her a few years ago, and she placed her wrist in his mouth. Her strength overcame his, and she felt a few drops of her blood land on his tongue. It was enough for him to turn in the event of him dying, and on that note, she dropped him.

"NO!" His brother screamed.

"I'm not going to do it," She told him, letting Sebastian's body slump to the floor as he attempted to cough out the blood. "I'm not going to stoop to your level, not if I don't have to." Her and James walked towards each other, meeting in front of the headlights of the impala once again. "I'm not going to do what you guys have been trying to

do since the day I turned. But maybe, just maybe you'll take this into account the next time you even think about coming for me again." She stabbed him in the chest with her finger. "Because despite what you've been telling me from Day 1: I'm not alone. And I never will be." He tried to move around her, but she stopped her. "And if you EVER come near me or my friends again," She poked him hard in the chest, "I will not hesitate next time." Her eyes drifted to the struggling Winchester. "Now get the hell out of here."

The only sound was their heaving breaths and Sebastian's whimpers from afar.

"You heard the girl, get the fuck out of hear." James turned to listen to the Chief, and just stared at him dumbfounded. He grunted when he didn't move, and shot his shotgun beside his feet, causing him to jump. "Go! Get the hell out of here!"

He bolted to action in an instant. He ran for his brother. He pulled him up, slumping his good arm over his shoulder and they limped to the passenger's side together. James dropped him in the leather seat and moved to the driver's side; mixing up their usual places in the impala. The impala roared to life, light's flickering off and on again, and then they all watched as the vehicle spurred to action. The tires made a loud screech as they burned against the loose gravel. They spun around into a half donut, and sped off into the inky darkness of the night.

She could hardly think, hardly breath, hardly speak as she stared at the two red lights from the back of the vehicle. She just watched and watched and watched until they got smaller and smaller, until they were barely nothing in the thick fog and the 1:00 am darkness. She felt a hand on her shoulder, but she didn't turn to see whose it was.

"You think they're gone for good?" She asked him, her shoulder leaning into his comforting grasp.

He took a long pause before answering, and she could feel his warm breath on her neck. She also heard the light pitter-patter of numerous other's footsteps approach her. She felt Eleven's hand wrap itself into her's, locking their fingers together. She also felt Steve's reassuring nudge from her right. She heard the other's whispers in relief and she

couldn't help but sigh as well.

Hopper gave her a reassuring squeeze, "I freakin' hope so."

A/N: Thank you for reading as always :)

abitooflighting: Thank you for your input!

ajahane: Hopefully I didn't leave you waitign too long!

MoonStars: Thanks for the input! I know I was so torn. It is important in their relationship.

gamby004: I'm so glad you're enjoying the pacing! Thank you for your review, as always! And thanks for your input.

I think I've made my decision for where Naomi will end up for the last stand off... thank you for all the reviews!

LEX

20. Chapter 20: Savior

She huffed a lungful of smoke out the window, tossing the butt of her cigarette outside as they drove along the back roads of Hawkins, Indiana.

The first moments that they removed themselves from the Byers' property, was mostly spent in silence. Naomi watched Eleven as she peered through the bank window of the Chief's truck. She could see her exhale, relaxing into the seat as she thought about her friends. She had so dearly longed for them the past year, and after barely an hour together, she was off again.

She could feel the tension in the car, Primarily between Hop and El. With El's new makeover; there was clearly something still to be discussed about regarding the past few days.

After another sixty seconds of silence, Naomi sighed. "Someone's gonna have to say something."

Hopper bit his bottom lip, regarding her in the rear view.

"There's obviously an elephant in the room, and frankly I'm curious as to why you're looking like me, El." She leaned forward, her ears peering over at Eleven's form.

"Elephant?" She questioned, her brows moving towards one another ever so slightly.

"It's just a figure of speech- like an idiom for something that's clearly being ignored." She explained patiently. "In this situation, your attire is the elephant."

El nodded, moving her form to face the passenger window in a way that expressed discomfort regarding the situation.

"So we're just not gonna talk about it then, huh?" Hopper asked, watching her intently as he drove along the barren road.

"About what?" She answered, pronouncing the 't' in a way that expressed her irritation.

Hopper sighed, taking a slow left turn as he spoke. "Oh I don't know, I'm just curious as to why all of a sudden you look like some sort of MTV punk," he popped the 'p' with his lips, and waited longingly for her response.

Eleven's eyes peered out the glass window again, ignoring Hopper.

"I'm not mad, kid." he reassured, "I just want to know where you've been. That's all." It was cute, listening to Hop scold her like a teenage daughter that got home from a party past her curfew. It almost felt... normal. *Almost.*

"To see Mama."

They were all silent, reveling in the bomb that she had dropped. Hoppers lips parted, and he faced the road, nervously gyrating through the information she had just revealed. "Okay," He muttered softly, in hopes to poach her to open up more. "...how'd you get there?"

"A truck." Of course, El wasn't one to open up much anyways, but Naomi knew she was just being stubborn.

"A truck?"

"A big truck," She confirmed, looking at him for the first time that drive.

"A big truck? Who's truck was it?" She could hear the inflection in his voice that expressed his dislike, and she heard his heartbeat raise in anger and in fear.

"A man's."

"A man's?"

"Hop," Naomi gave his right shoulder a squeeze, to reassure him but also to bring him back from the temper that she could see was forming.

Hopper's eyes were wide, peering at Naomi in the rearview, then darting back and forth from Eleven to the road. "Okay," he started, a

discerning look on his face. "So let me just get this straight in my head... so a nice man in a big truck drove you to your mama's, and then what? Your aunt Becky gave you those clothes and that makeup?"

There was another long pause, and Hopper was growing anxious, that she could tell by the obnoxious way he tapped his thumbs against the steering wheel.

"I..." She could hear the pain in El's voice as she pondered over the last day's events. "I shouldn't have left."

Hopper's eyes fixed back onto the dimly lit road. "Mmm-mmm." He shook his head. "No. This isn't on you, kid. I should have been there." Hopper swallowed. "I should have never lied to you about your mom. OR about when you could leave." Hopper paused. "There's a lot of things I shouldn't have done." His eyes flickered to the rearview, and he gave Naomi a weak smile.

Naomi gave him a hopeful, close-lipped smile back, which in some sort of weird way was their formal and final apologies to each other over what had happened between them. The non-verbal conversation gave her peace of mind.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm..." He inhaled sharply through his nostrils, "Like I'm just some kind of black hole or something."

Eleven watched him intently, "A black hole?"

"Yeah. It's a... You know, it's this thing in outer space. It's like, it sucks everything towards it and destroys it." He licked his lips.

From the corner of her eye, Naomi caught one painful tear falling from Eleven's eye. In that one expression of sadness, she could truly see how poignant and how consequential this conversation was for her. She had never had a family, she had never learned rules or discipline, happiness or morals. She was abused. Family was something new to her, and she was still learning the ropes.

There was one thing Naomi knew for sure, though. Eleven loved Hopper. He was her savior.

"Sarah had a picture book about outer space, she loved it." Hopper readjusted himself in his seat, not fully realizing what he had just vocalized. Naomi was curious as to why Hopper had never spoken before of Sarah to Eleven. He had barely spoken about it to Naomi, only once during a fight. Naomi knew the significance of the teal hair tie that was glued to his wrist.

Eleven stared out the front window for a moment, confused. "Who's Sarah?"

"Sarah?"

Eleven nodded, and Hopper just stared at her despondently as he thought about his beautiful baby girl that was so greedily taken from his loving arms by Death. "Sarah's my girl." His eyes closed for a moment, before peering back over at Eleven. "She's my little girl."

"Where is she?"

Again, Hopper swallowed as he took another turn. "Well that's kinda the thing, kid. She, uh... She left us."

Eleven, realizing what his words had meant, shed another tear, as a pained expression bloomed upon her face. "Gone."

"Yeah." Hopper sighed, "The black hole. It got her."

Naomi couldn't help but feel broken for him. She had dealt with the loss of her parents, her twin brother, her coven... but a child? She prayed she would never experience the loss of a child. She felt so much pain and empathy for Hop. He had endless amounts of love to give, and it wasn't fair that he had lost the little love of his life.

"And somehow, I've just been scared, you know?" She wasn't so sure that he was talking to her, or El. It seemed he was just expressing himself to the universe, hoping for someone to hear him. "I've just been scared that it would take you too." He added. "The both of you."

Naomi didn't realize she was crying until that moment. She had no words to express the powerful emotion that she felt in that car at that moment. She used her sleeve to dab her face.

"I think that's why I get..." His jaw clenched as he paused. He closed his eyes for a brief second, "So mad."

Naomi watched both of their faces, as they looked at each other. He could see the apparent father-daughter love, and she could even feel it towards herself. She was so lucky to have found Hopper that night. How had she deserved him? It would continue to baffle her until the end of time.

"I'm so sorry," He finally apologized. "For everything." He exhaled deeply, as if ridding every negative emotion from his body with one breath. "I can be so... so..." He struggled to find the word.

"Stupid?" She finished for him, sniffing.

"Yeah," He chuckled. "Stupid."

Eleven let out laugh, and Naomi couldn't help but exhale a chuckle as well.

The car was silent again, and Naomi thought that was it until she watched El discreetly reach over and grab Hopper's hand, intertwining it with her's. "I've been stupid too," She admitted.

Hopper smiled gently, "I guess we broke our rule."

Eleven smirked.

"I don't hate it, by the way," He looked her up and down, "This whole... look." He laughed.

Eleven's smirk grew wider.

"It's kinda cool," He leaned back in his seat.

There was a brief pause before Eleven spoke again. "Bitchin"

Naomi snorted, as Hopper tried to stifle a chuckle with a smile. "Okay. Sure. Bitchin"

They all chuckled at that.

Naomi watched the road again, just as El did. She watched the blur of the trees go by and she made note of the street signs. They were nearing the lab, at least she thought. She didn't know her way around the town much, considering she spent most of the last year in a log cabin in the middle of the woods.

"How are you feeling, El?" She leaned forward again. She asked this, because with every turn they made and every stop sign they reached, Eleven's heart beat got one pace faster.

She looked over at Naomi, analyzing her face for a moment. She saw her clench and unclench her fists nervously and watched her wipe her sweaty palms onto her jeans. "Scared."

Naomi gave her a gentle smile. If she could take the girls place, she would in a heartbeat. She knew this was out of her expertise though. We were talk other dimensions, not supernatural. If she could make a trade with a witch to do what El would be doing in a few moments, she would also do that, but something told her not even a witch could do it. El was special, she knew that. They all knew that. Not just with the way she makes objects fly, or how she can close interdimensional gates with her mind, she was special in many other ways. She was the most empathetic, loving, eager, friendly, and funniest girl she had met. There were many other words she could use to describe El, but there wasn't a specific word she could pinpoint to express how Eleven truly was; what makes Eleven Eleven.

"It's okay to be scared." She assured her. "We'll be right there with you, and I swear on my life I won't let anything happen to you."

Eleven readjusted herself in the chair to face back to Naomi. "Thank you."

"I love you, Eleven."

"I love you too." Her lips quivered, and she could sense the happiness radiating from Eleven. It was a good feeling, to be loved. Naomi knew that feeling; and she never thought she would again after her brother had been turned.

She playfully ruffled Eleven's head, and El chuckled as she turned

back to face the right way.

They were all silent, again. They reveled in the last few minutes before they pulled up to the Hawkins laboratory. She watched as Hopper's free hand grabbed Eleven's shaking hand again, squeezing it tenderly.

While Eleven gazed out the window, Hopper gazed at her.

Naomi smiled to herself, realizing something in that moment.

Eleven was his savior as well.

A/N: Sorry this chapter is so short! and that it took me so long!

Please leave a review it really helps :) This story is nearing an end. I'll have a few more chapters, five tops, and then I'll be starting the sequel. With the way I have it planned out, I can write a few chapters before the season comes out next year, but in the meantime I might make a one shot or a ST Prompt fan fiction, would you guys be interested in that? It could even involve Naomi in a few.

Thank you for the continuous love I receive from this story and others!

Also, P.S. I just bought tickets for Finn's band Calpurnia and I'm hella excited to see them play in December! Has anyone seen them live yet?

P.P.S JASPER WILL MAKE AN APPEARANCE I PROMISE AH

xoxo

21. Chapter 21: Walls

Naomi had never been to The Upside Down, and she wasn't too eager to see it either. Frankly, the other dimension still perplexed her. She understood a few key facts, such as that Eleven opened it unknowingly at the forceful hands of Dr. Brenner. She understood that there were tunnels, small portals like where Hopper had gotten stuck. She also knew that it was much like their own, if not the same, only the life forms dwelling there were other-worldly. The gate to the other dimension had been sitting in Hawkins Lab, growing, blooming. It expanded, spewing toxic biological matter whenever it got the chance to.

With the break of the indestructible glass that held the Gate within limits, it managed to leak the biological matter throughout the halls of the laboratory. Currently, they were tiptoeing through said lab.

With Hopper at the front, and herself at the back, there was no way they would let anything get to Eleven, who was walking steadily between them.

Naomi tried to focus all her senses on reaching out to the demodogs, but it was hard when she was dipping into another world so much like her own. She felt heavy, as if she held extra weight atop her back. Almost as if she was swimming, but she appeared to be walking normal; as did the others. She saw white specks of what almost look like snow, pass before her eyes. It would come in flurries, and then they would reach an area where it would disperse again. She also had a difficult time ignoring the bodies that lined the hallways. The massacre that had occurred here, claiming the life of Joyce's very own Bob Newby, became very visual for the three of them as they explored the Laboratory's chambers.

"Keep up," Hopper whisper-shouted as they rounded another corner.

She tried to shake the trance she was in but it was just so... odd. Every now and then she would catch a glimmer in her peripheral, where the flashing fluorescent lights would shine against the slime of the monsters that lined the halls.

Hopper appeared to know where he was going, and Naomi thought back to the times when he would leave the cabin to join Joyce and Will at their doctors appointments. He strided through the halls, panting as he flashed the light of his rifle around. There seemed to be a light smoke encircling them... not a fog. But it wasn't quite a fog. Everything just felt hazy.

Hopper darted left through a doorway, and Eleven followed hastily. She had almost forgotten that El spent the nearly all her life confined in these halls. She almost ran into her, when Eleven paused to look back down the hall they had just ascended from.

"You okay?" Naomi asked, squeezing her right shoulder.

Eleven swallowed, nodding as she continued after Hop.

The white specks started to come back, and she could sense they were getting closer. She could hear Hopper's footsteps echo as he entered the stairwell, and heard him descend a few stairs. Eleven followed closely behind, and Naomi lingered back to check their surroundings. Her posture looked somewhat of a boxer's; ready to lunge at the chance.

She could feel the shift just beneath her, ready to attack if need be.

She turned back, only to see both Hopper and Eleven weren't there. She quickened her pace to catch up.

When she caught up, she saw Hopper raise a finger to his lips as he released a 'shh'. "Stay there," he whispered. As soon as he rounded the stairwell to walk down the next set, the scent hit her.

The blood. It was pungent. She had smelled a lot of nagging at her throughout the halls, but this was a whole pool of it. A lake.

It hit her like a dodge ball to the face, and she could feel her body shift into her supernatural state. She didn't like that Hopper was going first, putting himself in danger to protect the two of them even considering that he knew Naomi was stronger, but Naomi wasn't going to leave Eleven alone either; not until she knew it was safe.

When she heard Hopper's sigh, she knew the coast was clear. "Oh

shit," He breathed, dropping his gun to the floor.

Naomi slid past eleven, but held her palm out to ensure Eleven would stay there.

When she rounded the corner, trotting slowly down the last few steps, she saw Hopper kneeling beside a near-dead body. "Hey Doc," he murmured.

Naomi analyzed the man, just as the man analyzed her un-natural form. She saw an older man, older than Hop but not by too much. His hair was gray and he was just clad in a doctor's uniform, only his entire framework was doused in blood.

Hopper sighed, analyzing the point of contact that appeared to be on his leg. "Those suckers got you pretty good, hey?" He ignored him, his eyes still glazing over Naomi and her read eyes.

Hopper tossed his head back to Naomi, following the Doctor's gaze. The Doctor was clearly surprised when Hop was unphased by her appearance. "This is Naomi, and she's one of the many secrets I have yet to reveal. She's going to be keeping you alive, right Naomi?"

Naomi nodded, shaking herself from the image in front of her. She couldn't lie to herself, if it wasn't for Eleven and Hopper being there she would've found herself in a sticky situation. The smell of his insides were just too overpowering, even for someone who wasn't all that hungry.

"Don't even think about, well, trying anything because I guarantee she can break your neck faster than she can blink an eye."

Naomi smirked, biting into her wrist. The sickening squelch of her teeth tearing flesh caused the doctor to grimace, and she walked towards him.

Hopper undid his jacket as he spoke, panting as he spoke to him. "Don't worry, you're in good hands."

Naomi held the doctors face still with her left hand, and allowed the blood from her wounded wrist to drip into his open mouth. He tried to resist, but strength wasn't something he really had at the moment.

He coughed the second the sour liquid touched his lips, but Naomi continued until a few drops managed to make their way down his throat. It was enough to start the healing process, and at that, she retrieved her arm back.

"So despite what you are inherently thinking, she's one of the good guys." He continued, "Her blood is sort of the catalyst to jump start your healing process. She basically just saved your ass." He ripped his belt off, pulling it through the loops.

She heard footsteps behind them, and both her and Hop turned to see Eleven behind them.

"Oh ya," he continued, "I've been meaning to tell you." Clearly, the doctor didn't need an explanation as his jaw went agape while he stared at Eleven's form. "This is Eleven. Eleven, Doc Owens, Doc Owens, Eleven," he introduced.

The doctor cocked his head while Hopper continued his ramble.

Naomi placed her hand on the Doctor's thigh, and it was a struggle for Dr. Owens to even comprehend the situation that was occurring. His eyes darted from Eleven, to Hopper, and then back to Naomi's hand on his thigh. He watched as the black veins snaked from his wound, to her hand; he watched it trail against her bicep, up to her shoulder, down to her collarbone then straight to where her beating heart should've been.

The doctor closed his eyes, relaxing into the cement walls as he grabbed onto the hand rail above him. "How did you-" His sentence was cut short by a phlegmy cough.

Hopper placed the belt underneath his torn leg and continued to speak as Dr. Owens fixated on the two girls like they were both creatures from the Black Lagoon. "They've both been staying with me for about a year, and El is about to save our asses." Hopper curled his lips inward, pausing his actions to look the doctor in the eyes. "Maybe when this is all said and done, you could help her out, too, you know? You could help her lead, like, a normal life. One where she's not poked, or prodded and treated like some sort of lab rat." Hopper's eyes squinted together as he spoke again, "I don't know, it's

just a thought," He pulled the belt tight again, squeezing it until it made the doc uncomfortable. He groaned, writhing in the wet blood for a moment.

"Think about it," He patted the doctor's shoulder again, and then stood. The doctor nodded, and with that sign on promise, Hopper retrieved a pistol from his belt, handing it to Dr. Owens. He clasped his hands around the gun, and relaxed again. "Don't go anywhere," he ordered, as if he could. It earned an almost chuckle out of the wounded soldier; causing Naomi to smirk.

The Chief stood, looking back and forth between the two girls, and continued the trek.

The fluorescent bulbs above them continued to flicker relentlessly, and the flashing of the alarm lights spun every now and again, but without the noise. The floating substances increased, and she tried to shoo them away with her hands like a fly. She could hear the buzz of the bulb's in the heart of her ears, and she spun in circles every now and again to observe every hall they turned into. The closer they got, the more the dimension leaked into their world.

"Stop," Naomi hushed, just as they were about to enter a lab.

Hopper and Eleven paused, waiting for her to react. Naomi closed her eyes, her hand still outstretched, and she listened. "They're in there," She whispered. "There's gotta be two... maybe three." It was hard to focus when she felt so disorientated, but she heard the wet breathing of at least a few of the demo-dogs. She reopened her eyes, and they all remained still

"Stay here," He instructed, pulling his gun higher up to get ready to aim.

"Hop-" She tried to argue.

"Stay." He repeated.

She stayed put, shuffling towards Eleven as Hopper shambled around the hall.

Eleven's shoulders moved up and down with each breath she took,

and she reeked of anxiety. She jumped slightly as Naomi placed a hand on her shoulder. "Hey, you're good." She ensured. Touch, she learned, was something that reassured Eleven. The second her hand grasped her shoulder, she slowed her breathing. She relaxed into Naomi's touch, but her face was still painted with dread and fear. That was something Naomi couldn't even take away.

"*Shit*," Hopper cursed, only loud enough for the supernatural to pick up.

Naomi bit her lip.

When he came back around the corner, he shook his head. "There's too many, you won't be able to keep them off."

"I can try-"

"No." He barked.

Naomi wasn't going to fight him on it, not at a time like this.

"There's another way." He waved for them to follow, and they both slowly tiptoed by the hallway. Naomi took the back again, and Eleven was in the middle. With every step, she grew increasingly anxious. It was like she thought himself would pop out and lock her up again. Naomi wanted so desperately to make it better; but the truth was there was only one person that could do this, and that was her.

Excluding the five minute detour, they managed to make it to the basement of the lab pretty quickly. If Naomi thought she felt weird before, she felt like she was tripping balls then. Her whole aura felt... off. She wondered if it was just a vampire thing, or if the other two felt the same. She had a suspicion that they felt similar, but not to the same extent that it was jacking up Naomi.

They all halted, staring at the broken glass of the call-room. They tried to ignore the dead body that laid beside Naomi's feet, slashed to death. Hopper and Eleven shared a look.

"*Chief are you there?*" She heard a stream of static come from Hopper's radio. "*Chief, do you copy?*"

Hopper pulled the radio to his lips, pressing the button along the side, "Yeah I copy," he answered.

There was a long pause, and she heard Jonathon panting into the walkie talkie before he said the two detrimental words that all three of them were waiting to hear. "Close it."

A/N: Thanks for reading! Please leave a review and let me know what you think.

gamby004: Thank you I appreciate your comments, as always! Awesome I'm glad to hear that. I'm very excited! Have you gone to one before?

Thanks again, loves!

xoxo

22. Chapter 22: Combat

A/N: I just wanted to take the time to say, while this chapter is small, it is one of my favorites. It's really a moment about family; about Eleven. I hope I did it justice enough. I also want to dedicate this chapter to gamby004 for always reviewing as it's people like you who encourage aspiring writers like me to continue. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

They stood on the free-flowing elevator; ones window washers used on skyscrapers, in silence. Hopper pressed the down arrow, and they all waited with gaited breaths as it lowered; the chains creaking disturbingly.

There was a slight breeze, but that wasn't the only chill that caused their spine to tingle.

The 150ft-200ft radius of the Gate was apparently a shockingly larger fault than what Eleven had previously witnessed a year ago when she opened it. That, Naomi could tell from her expression.

The red glow from the rift lit up their faces. It flickered every now and again, causing Naomi to ponder over what on earth could be causing the light to dim and brighten. Strange tendrils sprawled over the split. She could see movement, toxic biological growth as the gate tried to widen. The red light seemed to pulsate as they lowered the elevator even further.

Eleven gripped the bars tight with white knuckles. With her slippery palms, she reached her right hand over to Hopper's and clasped it tightly. With her left hand, she slipped it into Naomi's, locking them together. With hands gripped together, they took a step forward into brighter light, The gate seemed to burn it's brightest at that moment, as if it knew that Eleven was there. The elevator jolted to a halt, and they all remained still.

Eleven shared a look with each one of them, Hopper giving her a heartening nod, and then she released their hands after giving them both a tight squeeze.

Naomi chewed at the dead skin on her chapped lips, waiting for the girl to make her move.

Eleven stepped forward, until her front was pressed against the safety bar. The elevator swayed back and forth, and Naomi continued to brush away the white specs to make sure she could watch Eleven fixedly. She took time in raising her right hand towards the growing crevice. There was an electricity to the air, static almost, as Eleven raised her hand wholly. She watched as the girl's head dipped lightly, and observed as her brow bone lowered. Her hand started to shake, and she zoned in on the gate.

Naomi and Hopper shared a poignant look behind her back, and they both knew that the other one was praying for the girl's safety, as if there life depended on it. "You take left and front, I take back and right. Got it?"

Naomi exhaled, feeling nervous; for once. "Got it." She gnawed at her lip again. She tried to not think about the top or bottom, praying that it wouldn't be an issue when the time came.

The electric charge was even stronger before, and Naomi swore she saw a few of the tendrils start to thread themselves together; like stitches being performed on cut. Naomi wondered if Hopper could feel it too; Eleven's energy. it was strong, powerful; and it even scared her a little. No wonder the Gate opened in the first place, that much power in the wrong hands could cause a lot of trouble.

Her ears started to ring as Eleven's posture stiffened, her hand outstretched even further now. Her hand trembled, and the red glimmer seemed to dim to blood orange. It strengthened in vibrancy; like it was fighting back. The brilliance of it caused her a mild headache.

A large shadow appeared behind the rift, and she saw outstretched limbs pass by it like a spider. The shadow must have been at least 150ft tall. It clicked for her, then. Shadow. It was the shadow monster, the 'Mind Flayer'. It had to be. She couldn't imagine anything more petrifying, nor anything else that resembled its dark silhouette.

Eleven grew increasingly distressed, her posture starting to falter. Her brows lifted, and she observed the being behind the rift.

Naomi smelt the blood before she saw it, which caused her no surprise once she saw crimson liquid leak from her left nostril.

Hopper tightened his grip on his gun, staring blankly at the creature that paced back and forth behind the Gate. It let out some form of a low growl, one that frightened all of them to the depth of their cores. Never in life has she ever imagined anything like that creature ever existing, and she couldn't even fully see it. She could barely begin to imagine how scared Will had been when he got attacked by it at school. Even in Death, she hadn't been that afraid of something. Not until now.

Eleven shook her head lightly, and focused back on the fissure. Her hands trembled even more, so much that it almost looked like she was having a seizure. Blood dripped from her nostril like a leaky faucet, and she could see the veins on the side of her forehead start to pop out. She was doing something though, this time Naomi knew for sure. The filaments around the edges of the crevice started to grow inwards, outstretching themselves to attach together. It burned bright orange as it moved, like fire. She felt the heat radiate from it too, resembling a conflagration.

Naomi scanned their surroundings every now and again, and she could feel that they weren't alone, that the creature behind the rift was going to fight back using it's army. She heard the panting below, and above. She could sense the organs inside them that somewhat resembled hearts. "Get ready," She muttered to Hopper, to which he nodded and raised his gun.

The tinnitus grew louder, and Naomi had to cover an ear.

"ErrrAHH" The screech came from her left, and despite Hopper's orders, he pivoted and pulled the trigger.

Another howl resonated behind her, and she span around to see the beast crawling inside the elevator upside down. She grabbed the brute by it's neck, ignoring the blare of Hopper's gun that blasted shot's beside her right ear, and threw the beast to the ground beneath

them. It screamed as it fell backwards, and Naomi watch it sail towards darkness, it's limbs outstretched in an attempt to grab onto something.

Hopper twirled around, taking his place back on the right side while Naomi darted over to the left.

She grabbed two that had lunged themselves off the walls towards the elevator, and bashed their heads together. She heard the satisfying crack of their skulls, and dropped them into the inky black below.

"They're everywhere!" He screamed, while clicking an empty chamber "Shit, I'm out of ammo." He tossed the gun to the floor and removed his shotgun from his other shoulder. He filled the chamber with ammo, and pulled the safety; preparing for battle again.

She could hear them pile themselves on top, and the elevator started to swing back and forth from their efforts to destroy them. She could also feel them climbing up the chain below them, the elevator even jolting down a few inches. She tried her best to stay as still as possible as she threw them off the elevator, throwing fists and snapping necks as often as she could.

A particularly large one managed to climb onto her back, biting into her right shoulder; all while that was happening she struggled to release the one's hands from the front of the shaft.

"Hop!" She screamed, while breaking the fingers of the one that attempted to disrupt Eleven.

The Chief spun around, and spent no time in aiming. He fired a bullet, or rather bullets, straight for the life form that had attached itself to her. It bellowed as it fell wounded to the floor. Naomi kicked it to the side.

The shaft jolted again, and they fell another few inches. "Shit," She cursed, sharing a look with Hop.

Naomi heard panting coming from the girl behind her, and she could hear the struggle she was having in closing the interdimensional gate.

She knew there was nothing she could do to help beside keep those damn beasts away, so that's what she did.

"I'm going up top," She announced to Hopper, placing her right foot on top of the safety bar.

"No!" He grabbed onto her ankle, and she kicked him off.

"Hopper trust me, there's too many. This thing will go down." He started for her ankle again, but then stopped himself. he took a deep breath through both nostrils, and then nodded.

She smiled at him, pulling herself up onto the bars.

The second she stood on the railing, her body turning to grab onto the roof, they swatted at her. She was surprised to see so many. Eight, maybe nine, had piled themselves on there. They were of the bigger variety as well. Some clung to the chain above them, and she realized why the elevator was falling when she witnessed another leap onto the pulley.

She grabbed the hand that swatted at her, and threw the slug-like creature off of the shaft. It screamed as it sailed away, slamming into the wall across from them.

She heard the shotgun pump a few more shots, and she could smell the gunfire.

She pulled herself on top; replacing where the previous demogorgon was, and she went to town.

She shifted, knowing that in some sort of weird way that would make her stronger. She promised that nothing would happen to Eleven, not a single scratch; not a scar; nothing, and she would damn well make sure that that was going to be the truth.

She hissed at them as she battled each one. They all tried to climb on top of her like monkeys, take her down; even if it was kamikaze style. They would do anything for that Shadow Monster behind the fissure. She grunted as she felt claw marks dig into her thigh, teeth marks dig into her shoulder, bruises form as tails slammed into her side. She would take any pain she had to at that moment, and with adrenaline

pumping through her veins; she knew she could take it all.

A few relentless screams escaped her lips as she fought off the creatures that where so desperately striven to bring her down.

She bit into the neck of a few, knowing that it drove them crazy. Their flesh was thick and leather-like. It was hard to tear, which explained why it made them so angry. Evolution (or whatever the hell occured in The Upside Down) had designed their skin to withstand the pressure. She tried to break a few necks, she managed to at least kill one or two. She kicked off a few, broke some teeth, some tails. She felt strong. She felt powerful. This was what her powers were meant for; not hurting others, but saving others. With each dying demogorgon, she felt more dominant, more dynamic.

There was another jostle of the elevator shaft, falling half a foot this time, as two more frenzied creatures jumped onto the roof.

She spun around, choking one while she kicked another one off behind her.

She managed to slow down the one in her arms, and it panicked enough for her to be able to throw him off the cart. The other one behind her, though, grasped onto her legs as it fell. It anchored itself to her left leg with it's teeth, while it's arms and legs tried to dig into her for support, so it could overcome her and crawl on top again. It was the last one on the roof, and that's what frustrated her the most as she lost her footing and slipped against the slick metal.

Her slime covered hands somehow managed to grab against the edge of the roof, and she thrashed about as she tried to kick off the beast from her legs. It's teeth were too embedded into her though, and she grunted at the pain as her slick hand tried to hold on tight enough. She wasn't sure what was beneath her. Was it just tiling of the laboratory? Or was there the gate? A tunnel? Would she fall and be eaten by demogorgons? She knew she couldn't be killed by much, but if her body as eaten alive by the demons, she wouldn't be able to return from that.

She let out a scream as she slipped again. Her body was free falling for a few milliseconds before finding another savior. She held onto

the safety railing of the cart, feeling it sway as the demodog and her swung back and forth. She grunted as she tried to pull herself up, but struggled to do so. She was just glad for her quick reflexes that somehow managed to keep her still on the elevator shaft.

She heard a pump of a shotgun, and she sighed in relief as she felt the beast fall limp and release itself. The second the bullet entered it's body, the teeth retracted and it joined the rest of it's expired family below.

Hopper slung his gun back, kneeling downwards. Just as her hand was about to slip again, Hopper managed to grip her forearm. She was happy for the cliché that had just occurred, because that situation involved her life. He held her waist as he pulled her up, and hugged her once she stood fully erect.

Naomi felt his warm breath on her neck, and she heard the sigh of relief that he tried to hide when he pulled her close.

Naomi was about to return the embrace, when she heard the screaming.

Her and Hopper spun around, and things seemed to move slowly after that.

It was like they were in a dream.

Naomi's face contorted into fear as she lunged for Eleven, but Hopper held her back. Eleven, with both hand's outstretched, started to levitate. Blood dripped from both nostrils, leaking into her smile lines and even dripping off her jawline. At first it was a few centimeters, and then it was a few inches, and finally she was floating a good foot. She screamed and screamed and screamed and it seemed like she would run out oxygen, but she never did. She could hear the rage in her shriek, the pain. She could feel it. Her face grew dark-very dark. As if every vein in her entire head had started to pump black tar instead of blood. She could swear that there was red around her eyes, like the color of watched as a smoke like spiral emerged from the last few feet of the open fissure, and shot itself towards Eleven.

El didn't stop though, no. it only made her angrier.

The orange light brightened, while the edges continued to thread themselves tighter. The smoke made it's way closer to her, but Eleven fought back. She could see a visible force emerging from Eleven's fingertips, she could see the barrier as it smacked against the shadow creature that was heading for her. Naomi and Hopper shielded their faces as the white specs flurried around them. Pieces of toxic biological material peeled themselves from the walls and were sucked into the rift, like it was a black hole. There was a struggle of power, only for a moment, and then Eleven screamed louder.

It all happened so fast after that. A strong wind picked up from god knows where, causing her hair to flutter around her face. she tried to tuck it behind her ear as she watched the rest with intensity. The last few inches of the Gate were blazing a bright orange, and just before the last of the tendrils stitched together, Eleven forced the shadow monster into it.

Eleven released a quiet breath, her body falling towards Hopper's open and ready arms. Just as the last of the oxygen escaped her lips; the tinnitus stopped, the breeze halted, and the world fell silent around them.

Thank you for reading.

I will try to update the next chapter ASAP as I'm on a writing streak right now.

xoxo

23. Chapter 23: Do Not Go Gentle

She used soft swiping motions to dab away at the blood that swathed itself on Eleven's face. It had started to crust, but it was deeply embedded in the fine lines that encompassed her lips and her nose.

Every so often, she'd still. She'd wait a few seconds, holding her breath, just to check Eleven's heartbeat; to make sure she was still alive. Still breathing. She was like a battery. She had to recharge—that was what Hopper had explained to her. She couldn't help but worry, though. She watched her chest intently as she cleaned, to make sure she could see the rise and fall of it.

The three of them shared an intimate moment, once the gate was shut. Eleven had her arms around Hopper's neck, her face nuzzled into his chest while she sobbed. It was so hard to tell if she was in pain. Naomi reached out, touching her hand, but when she grabbed it; no pain came. Nothing. She blamed the tears on exhaustion.

The blood ran off her face, staining Hopper's jacket. He didn't care though, in fact, he held her even tighter when she tried to avoid getting it on him. Hopper threw an arm over Naomi, and Naomi moved in. Eleven's head moved to Naomi's chest, and they just stayed like that.

They stayed like that for a long while. Both her and Hop could feel the girl tremble against them. The only noise was the sound of her whimpers as she cried.

"You did good, kid." He had said.

Eleven had never received recognition for anything, before. Especially not inside Hawkins lab. She tried so hard to curl her lips upward, to give him a proud smirk, but she was too weak. So she just continued to wallow in their arms.

Naomi felt Hopper plant a kiss on her temple, then Eleven's. He shut his eyes, and rested his forehead against the safety bar beside him. They were unmoving for a long time. They didn't even stir when they watched Eleven's eyes flutter to a close. The sound of her cries

stopped, and soft breathing took over her lungs.

"Is it done?" Jonathon asked the question, over the radio, like he already knew the answer. He questioned them like he already knew that it was over but just wanted confirmation.

Hopper didn't move from his position. Naomi wasn't even quite sure if he had heard him, though it was loud enough to echo in the cavernous depth that they were submerged in.

She scooted out of Hopper's arms, allowing him to embrace Eleven even more wholly, and retrieved the walkie talkie from his belt loop.

She pressed the button on the left side, and held her trembling lips close to the microphone. "It's done."

They had walked back after that. They remained on the open shaft for another five minutes before Hopper pressed the up arrow to return back to the basement floor. Hopper carried Eleven's fragile body until they got to the stairwell they found their selves in earlier. He traded with Naomi, putting his arm under Dr. Owens as they exited the building. The doctor said nothing as they left. He asked no questions, gave them no odd looks, he just remained silent.

Naomi led the way, holding Eleven like a young child as she navigated through the eerily empty halls. They found themselves at the open entrance moments later and darted for the truck.

Hopper sat behind the steering wheel, while the doctor sat in the passengers. Naomi sat in the back with Eleven, and she did her best to buckle her up, while still allowing herself to protect the girl's limp body with her arms.

The drive back to Joyce's house felt like an eternity. She wasn't surprised to see their car back in the driveway. Hopper didn't even stop in to say anything while dropping them off, he just told Naomi to let them know that he would be back; that he was dropping off at the emergency but nothing more. It sounded like he was reassuring Eleven's unconscious being more than he was requesting Naomi to relay information.

"Oh my God! Is she alive? Is she okay? Is she safe?" Mike had barely taken half a breath as he stammered the words out. She also wasn't surprised to see that he was the first one there. He sprinted for the end of the driveway, striving for Naomi and El the second the front door opened up.

"She's fine," She had inspirited him. *"She's just exhausted. She needs to rest, Mike."*

"Is she breathing? Can you hear her heartbeat? You can do that right?"

Naomi tried to hide the smirk from Mike, whilst he circled around her like a tiny chihuahua puppy. *"Yes. It's beating, breathing's normal. She's fine Mike. I promise."*

"You promise?" He stopped her, pausing before they managed to reach the front steps.

She looked him in the eyes, giving him a warm smile. She could see the tears that brimmed his lids. She could see the emotion behind the doe-brown eyes. She could feel the compassion he had for her. 'It's something friends keep. They can't break it. Ever.' That's what Eleven had explained to her when reminiscing about Mike and his promises.

"I promise." She vowed.

She could see the physical relief in his body after she had mentioned those two words. His eyes shut tightly for a brief second, and he exhaled. His shoulder's relaxed, and his gaze moved to her sleeping form. Her mouth was slightly ajar, her pink, chapped, lips, parting ever so slightly.

Naomi started for the door again. *"She just needs to recharge a little bit. She put up one hell of a fight."*

Mike kicked the gravel with his sneaker. *"Trust me, I know."*

And that was how she found herself in the Byers' washroom, cleansing Eleven of the dirt, the hair gel, and the blood that caked her body. For the sake of privacy, she left Eleven's undergarments on. Well for that reason, and for the fact that Mike obsessively knocked every five seconds to check that she was still alive. If Naomi took too

long to answer, she was sure he would barge in there.

Naomi squeezed the sponge, soaking up more soap from the bath water. She ran the sponge down Eleven's neck, across her shoulders, and onto her forearms. Naomi caught sight of the three numbers that were typed so neatly in black ink on her wrist. She flipped it up more, washing over the tattoo with the sponge. She smirked to herself.

Eleven.

Who knew that number could have so much meaning to her a year ago?

"I'm coming in," She heard Joyce's melodic voice from behind the wooden door, subsequent to three light raps. She shut the door with careful precision afterwards, being cautious to not wake some of the sleeping beings in the other room. Naomi heard a few people still awake. She could hear Hopper speaking to Steve in the living room, and she could hear Mike tapping his fingers together obsessively outside the bathroom door. Besides that, she assumed everybody was asleep.

"I brought some clean towels," She sat them on top of the closed toilet seat, giving Naomi a warm smile as she shifted into a kneeling position beside her. "How do you think she's doing?"

Naomi ran her tongue along her lips, "I think she just needs to rest for a few days. I doubt she's gonna be herself for a while."

Joyce nodded, her lips curling back towards her.

"Let's hope the kid can wait a few more days for her." Naomi moved to Eleven's hair as she spoke, using the sponge to wet it.

"He's waited this long," Joyce shrugged.

Naomi chuckled as she brushed back Eleven's curls that were now starting to reform. Joyce helped her rinse her hair. She grabbed a cup from the kitchen, and together they managed to shampoo her whole head. Once they drained the tub, they dried her off. They changed her into a pair of oversized pajamas that Joyce had lent her.

"She can sleep in my room," Joyce offered, beaming down at the girl that was in Naomi's arms again. Joyce brushed away a curl that fell upon Eleven's eyes. "She's quite the life saver, isn't she?"

"You have no idea."

Expectedly, Mike bombarded her the second Joyce had opened the door for them to emerge through.

He paused after asking at least three, maybe four questions regarding El's wellbeing "Oh." Was all he manage to sputter out.

Naomi shared a glance with Joyce, who was walking to the kitchen and exiting the conversation. "What?" Naomi asked, only the two of them in the hallway now. Mike's lips parted, and he beamed down at her, his hand's still by his side. That was the quietest, and the stillest, Naomi had seen him, well, ever. "What is it, Mike?" She repeated.

"Curls." He whispered.

"Hmm?"

"Curls," He murmured louder, pointing to the ringlet that danced beside her cheek. "She has curls."

"Oh," Naomi gave him a funny, but amusing, look. "Yeah." She pivoted, ignoring him as she trotted down the hallway. "I guess you've never seen her with hair."

Mike scratched the back of his as he ran up beside her. "Yeah..." I thought her hair was straight, I mean, from before." He hitchhiked a thumb back to the entry way, referring to their reunion.

Naomi chuckled, "That's called hair gel. Ever heard of it?" She regarded the dark mop of hair on his head.

Mike glared at her as he opened Joyce's bedroom door for her.

"How is Will doing?" She asked, after thanking him with a slight nod. She moved to Joyce's side of the bed and placed Eleven down gently. She moved her towards the middle, and adjusted the pillow beneath her wet hair.

"Hmm?" Mike didn't even look up from Eleven's sleeping form.

"Will," She repeated, pulling the quilt over her body. "How's he doing?"

Mike pressed his lips together. "Oh, yeah. He's about the same as her, I guess. They got the Mind Flayer out of him and he just crashed."

"I suppose that's good," Naomi muttered, as she stood erect.

"I suppose so." Mike agreed. He gazed at her face for a long time, analyzing her features. His eyes danced over the light curls atop her head, moving to the dark lashes that so beautifully complimented her face, then to her small, pink, lips. Naomi imagined that the last time he had seen her, she looked much different. Her frame thin, her skin pallid. Naomi had remembered her like that from their first meeting. She was much more proportionate now, with Hopper's ego extravaganzas and frozen dinners inside of her. "Hey, uh, if you're tired I can take over and watch her. I mean, if you want to go find Steve or something, that is."

She shot the boy a glare at the mention of the Harrington boy's name. "Okay kid, yeah. Sure. Keep your distance though because Jim still has ammo in his shot gun." She warned.

Mike gave her an appreciative smile, ignoring her threat, as he placed his behind on the side of the bed.

Naomi observed the two lovebirds one last time before completely shutting the bedroom door. When she spun around, she was met with a hard chest, and a familiar scent.

"What's the kid doing?" Hopper tried to use his brick-like form to push past her and into the bedroom.

Naomi placed a hand in the fore of the chest. "He's just watching her, don't worry."

"I can watch her." He argued.

"I know- but Hop. I think you at least owe the boy some time alone with her." Naomi shot him a look.

Hopper sighed, rubbing his light beard with his hand. "There's plenty of time for them to share together now."

She gave him a look that said 'really?'

"You're not going to let me past, are you?"

"No," She answered. "Now go change. You reek of that slimey shit still." She pushed his chest, slipping past him and down the hall. "How are you supposed to score a another woman smelling like that?" She mothered him.

Hopper chuckled, and Naomi smiled to herself as she made her way down the hall. Despite her reaction at Mike's mention of Steve, she still sought out for him with an eager heart. She peaked in the living room, gazing over the room of sleeping bodies.

Somebody had nailed a blanket over the open window to keep out the breeze. Joyce had gifted them pillows and blankets, and they lined the floors and couches making it difficult for her to meander through.

Despite having his own room, Jonathon slept soundly on Nancy's lap on the burgundy couch. At the end of the couch, with his mouth agape and drool pooling from his lips, was Dustin. His hair was disheveled, his hat barely still sitting on his head. Jonathon's feet were in his lap, and one hand held his head up while the other hand rested on Jonathon's legs. Lucas and Max were in the middle of the room, snoozing closely to each other. Their faces were were only centimeters apart, and Naomi imagined their reactions if they woke up still in that position.

Will, surprisingly, was also in the living room also. He had a quilt wrapped around him, but he was clad in star wars pajamas, unlike the hospital gown she had last seen him. The color had returned to his face, and the bags under his eyes didn't seem so purple anymore.

She giggled at the thought that she had never truly seen the boy while he was conscious. She would make sure to introduce herself in the morning, or whenever he woke up. She already felt like she knew him though. She had that overwhelming feeling, like she did with

Eleven, that she wanted to protect him. She would take a bullet for him, just as she would the rest of the game, and he had never even spoken a word to her.

She stepped over his sleeping form, walking past him to move to the kitchen.

When she entered the kitchen, she saw Steve's oblivious exterior turned away from her, fiddling with something in his hands. She leaned against the frame of the doorway, crossing her arms together. The stir had announced Naomi's arrival, and he spun in the dining room chair to face her.

She gasped sharply when she saw his appearance. His face was swollen, his left eye barely open. His bottom lip was split open, blood still crusting it. His eye had a purplish black bruise, and his hair was definitely not up to normal standard. She moved from the door frame and took a seat beside him, whispering as she spoke. "What the hell happened Harrington?"

"Billy Hargrove happened." He tried to give her a weak smile, but his wounds prevented that from happening comfortably.

She grabbed his left hand, running her finger pads over the bruised, split knuckles. She stole the antiseptic soaked cloth from his hand. "Give me that," She ordered, after already having snatched it from his hands. She ran the cloth gently over his split knuckles as she spoke. "Who on earth is Billy Hargrove?" She wasn't sure if she wanted to know, because at this precise moment she felt like breaking Billy's spine in two.

"Max's step-brother" He answered, hissing when she ran over a particularly gnarly wound. "He's not too fond of Lucas, I suppose."

Naomi smiled to herself.

"What?" Steve asked, capturing her discreet grin.

"Nothing," She shook her head, grabbing his other hand to cleanse. "That's just sweet, that's all. You stood up for them."

Steve shrugged. "Yeah, I mean- I don't know. I guess so. Anybody else

would've done the same."

Naomi laughed, "Babysitter Steve strikes again."

They both chuckled at the nickname. Naomi grabbed some more contents from the first aid kit on the floor and moved to his face. She wiped his face clean, much like she did Eleven's moments ago. They were silent for a few minutes, Steve watching her as she danced around. His eyes glazed over her, and he took the chances he could to observe not only her face, but her other features as well.

When Naomi ran a thumb over a tender spot near his temple, he winced sharply.

She retracted her hand immediately, like she had been scolded. "That hurts?"

He nodded.

"Sorry," She muttered; trying again but gentler.

"Shoot! Ah." He hissed again. Part of him was being a whiner for the sake of her attention, but the other part of him was actually in discomfort.

"Sorry!" She winced. "Sorry." She licked her lips, putting the cloth down. "Here." She moved her chair to face him directly, and she sat again. She placed one hand on the side of his face, while the other grabbed his left hand. She intertwined their fingers together, and she wasn't sure why she did that (given that it wasn't even necessary), but she did. Her other hand lightly stroked his face, and she was gentle in her motions as her fingers swept over his tender skin.

She shut her eyes, and she could feel Steve's eyes and her, and she exhaled loudly.

She heard Steve wince as she extracted the pain from his wounds. She heard his exhale of relief as the pain completely rid from his body, and she felt it tingle up her arms. The hot ache twinged up her arms, then towards her undead heart.

She could've let go then, but she didn't. Her eyes opened slowly, and

she just stared at him. Steve stared back, too. They shared a raw moment for a while, until he spoke again. "What was that?"

"I took away your pain," She whispered, as if being careful not to scare him.

Steve smiled at her; a real, genuine smile. "Thank you."

She didn't know why she was still stroking the side of his cheekbone, but she was. Once the electricity between them faded, she felt awkward; and it was very apparent to Steve. He let out a small laugh, and she tried to force a chuckle as her hand dropped back into her lap.

Their hands remained together, though. Interlocked at the side of their legs. Their knees pressed together, and they observed one another in the quiet corners of the kitchen.

"Makes you seem a little less scary," Steve ran his free hand through his head of hair, "I mean- taking away the pain."

She shrugged, "Until you think about the fact that it's really only there for me to be able suck people's blood and not have them feel it as much."

Steve rolled his eyes, his thumb squeeze her hand as he did so. "You always gotta take it there, hey?"

"Always, S." Her eyes fell to the floor with an awkward half-smile.

"Yeah, well, still cool Nosferatu." He commented.

She shot him a glare. "I spent a year being called the most cliché names. Don't even try me, Harrington."

He stuck his tongue out at her.

She hated to admit the fact that she liked the way his calloused thumb ran over her index knuckle. It soothed her, even gave her a warm fuzzy feeling in the pit of her stomach. She wasn't used to that feeling. Sure, she had been in a relationship before, but she had never felt a feeling like that. It was new to her. Was that what butterflies

felt like?

Another awkward silence crept up on them, and she removed her hand from his hand. She wiped her sweaty palm on her pajama pants that Joyce had lent her, and stood up. As if on cue, she heard a laughter radiate from outside. Naomi moved around the fridge to see through the back door. She saw Hopper and Joyce, their bodies close together as their backs pressed up on the window. Their arms were pressed together, and she saw the smoke of the cigarette between her lips. She passed it to Hopper, and he took it from her shaky fingers.

"Is it weird that I totally think that they'd make a great couple?" Steve proposed, "I mean, besides the fact that she just saw her boyfriend get massacred," He said it somberly, as if that made up for his horrendous statement.

"No," She responded, ignoring the last part of his remark. "I agree." A smile crept on top of her lips as she watched the two old friends pass the cigarette around.

Steve stood from the dining room table, causing her to spin around. "I suppose we should get some rest, at least." he nodded towards the living room.

"Yeah, you're right." She walked over to the counter to grab a smoke from her jacket pocket. "I'm just going to have a cigarette, if that's okay." She had never asked permission to do something before, and she was shocked at the words that escaped her lips.

Steve nodded, shoving his hands in his pockets. "I'll grab us some blankets and pillows," He declared.

She gave him a thumbs up, grabbing her zippo. Steve walked off down the hall, while Naomi made her way to the front of the house. She didn't want to disturb the two adults in the back, so she opened the front door and sat on the porch steps to do her nightly ritual. She thought about giving the habit up, but given that it didn't harm her in any way like it did most, and the fact that it really, *really*, helped her cravings, she decided otherwise.

She lit the smoke between her lips, inhaling.

The light of the moon and the orange glow were the only beams outside. She looked up, watching the stars as she smoked her fag. It must have been three, maybe four in the morning.

She rested her elbows on her knees, one hand under her chin while the other held the smoke. She did a sweep of the house with her hearing, listening for anything out of the ordinary. The first thing she eavesdropped on was Dustin's snoring. She shook her head at the snorting and wet breaths that he exhaled. The next thing she heard was Hopper and Joyce. She felt bad listening in on them, but then again she didn't really care.

"So what now?" Joyce questioned, *"The girls stay with you?"*

"I hope so," He responded, *"Its cramped though, the two of them sharing a room. And, I mean, Nay's an adult."* Naomi was surprised to hear him calling her the nickname her twin brother had given her when they were merely toddlers. *"I was thinking of letting her stay closer in town. My old place is by the lake. It's out of the way, but not too far from us. There's two bedrooms, she can have the guest and leave my old one for El or I whenever we come over. More of a place to sleep, really. Her and Eleven are attached at the hip."*

"That's a good idea." Joyce appraised. Okay. Now Naomi felt really bad from eavesdropping. Still, it didn't stop her. *"I could help you flip it, maybe."*

"Yeah," He agreed, *"I'd like that."*

She drifted away from their conversation and into another.

"-ike?"

"El! I didn't mean to wake you," Mike muttered, *"I was just trying to grab a pillow. The carpets a little uncomfortable."*

"M-Mike," She murmured happily.

"Hi," was all he mustered up.

A hushed tranquility followed after.

"Real?" Wss all she said.

"W-What do you mean, El?" He asked, "Is this real?"

Naomi assumed she nodded.

"Yeah, yeah it's real."

"You're real." She repeated. "M-Mike."

"I'm here," he comforted her. "You saved us, El. Do you understand? You saved us all. Again."

"Mhm," You could hear the sleepiness in her voice. She usually didn't respond to gratitude, either. That was something Naomi had come to learn, especially if it was regarding her powers. "You're here." She was still dwelling on the fact that Mike was in the same room as her. Naomi wondered if she would even remember this, though. She sounded barely conscious enough to speak. Her voice was hoarse, and she could hear it croak as she muttered incoherently.

"Yeah, and I'm never going to leave your side again. Okay, El? Never." He paused, "Maybe to sleep, or to go home and visit my family, but that's it. I swear. I promise."

"Mike?"

"Yes?" He replied hastily.

"My name is Jane." That shocked even Naomi. Was that her true name? The name she was born with? Terry Ives had made such a beautiful human being, with the most simplistic, yet endearing name. Somehow it fit her perfectly. Not quite the same as Eleven, or El, but still very fitting. Naomi could never stop calling her what she was used to, though. "I went to see Mama. And Kali."

"Kali?" It was like he was reading Naomi's mind.

Again, silence, which she assumed was a nod.

"I like Eleven, though," She whispered to him.

"I do too," He agreed. "You'll always be El to me."

"I'm your El." She breathed quietly.

Naomi could distinctly pinpoint Mike's stammering heartbeat over everyone else's in the house. It resembled a jackhammer.

"Mike?"

"Yeah El?"

"Will you sleep on the bed with me?" She was surprised to hear such a direct demand coming from Eleven's lips, even if she was a little fuzzy-brained at the moment.

"S-Sure." Naomi could practically hear the internal debate that tainted his voice. There was shuffling, and she heard both heartbeats rise inside Joyce's room. Mike sat down on the bed with her, and she heard him pull up the blankets.

"Hey, Eleven?"

"Yeah Mike?"

"I'm glad you're back."

"Me too."

Naomi inhaled the last puff of her smoke, and pressed it against the porch steps. She smothered it with the foot of her slippers, and pivoted to go back inside the house.

She opened the door discretely, and shut it behind her.

She tried to step over the pile's of crumpled paper, avoiding them like they were mines. She caught sight of a lightly snoring Steve across the room. His head was propped up on flat pillow, a thin sheet covering his blood-stained clothes. A few feet from him, an empty pillow, much fluffier than his, lay neatly adjacent to him. Two folded blankets were directly underneath. She smiled to herself.

She tiptoed through the labyrinth of bodies and paper, kicking aside

some leftover glass from the window, and kneeled to lay beside Steve.

She moved the pillow closer to him, despite him placing it a good distance away, and she faced towards his back. She curled up into her usual sleeping position and pulled both blankets over herself. She comfortably laid the first one on top of her, and she placed the larger one on top of them both, seeing as his pallid skin as covered in goosebumps from the broken window. The blanket didn't do much for the temperature in the room.

Despite the temperature, she was more than comfortable exactly where she lay, with only a thin pillow and a rock hard floor beneath her. She was just as comfortable as everyone else appeared.

She felt Steve's warmth radiate off onto her, and she shivered. She yearned for human warmth, and she had been more than comfortable with the squished room full of people that it came from. There were so many heartwarming smells, so many beating hearts. The rise and fall of everyone's chest filled her ears, and she closed her eyes.

She curled her hands up to her small frame, tucking the blanket under her chin, she shuffled her body closer to Steve. Her scooting accidentally caused a knee to the back, and he kinda sorta woke up. He turned over, at first startled to see her so near, but then he smiled lazily. He gave her a heart-warming, melting grin, and then he closed his eyes. He was half-asleep, which explained why he was so confident in his gesture, and he grabbed her hands. He held her cold hands within his warm ones, holding them close to his chest.

They fell asleep like that, the two of their hands intertwined.

She swore she had never had such a comfortable sleep, than she did that night. Knowing that her friends were safe, knowing that there were no more secrets, no fights.

She was smiling to herself as her body relaxed and her thoughts ebbed away.

Despite feeling so bright and full of life, darkness surrounded her as she slipped into oblivion.

A/N: Okay. I lied. Maybe this one is my favorite chapter I've written... I don't know.

Next chapter has Jasper in it! Unless I decide to half it, then in which case it'll be the chapter after that.

I'd love to hear your thoughts. This story used to get so much feedback, now it doesn't! I would be so appreciative to hear from all of you readers out there, it really inspires me to keep writing. It's also what gets me to write faster.

If there was only one person actually reading this though, I wouldn't be mad. I do this because I love it, not feed others. I love to write, and someday I hope to publish a horror book.

xoxo.

Gamby004: Thank you, as always!

24. Chapter 24: Afterwards

The next few weeks went by unusually quickly. Most of it was spent adjusting to normality once again.

The morning after closing the gate they all had a pancake breakfast. It was weird to see everyone in the same room together, eating, talking, not stressing about demogorgons, Winchesters, or the Mind Flayer. Eleven slept soundly in Joyce's room. Naomi noted the color returning to her skin, the more lively beat in her heart. She wouldn't doubt that she'd be sleeping for another day, or so.

Mike saved her a small stack of flapjacks with a tiny dish of syrup for her on the side.

Will was the last one to wake up, and she was the first to notice his lazy form appear in the door frame of the kitchen. He fisted his eyes with the sleeve of a navy sweatshirt. The bags were still dark and concave, but they were improving.

"Who are you?" He croaked, his hand dropping to his side.

"Hi Will," She greeted, jumping down from her place on the counter. "I'm Naomi." She held a hand out to the boy. He cautiously placed his small hand in hers, shaking it lazily. Naomi beamed at him while he stared dumbfoundedly at her. "I'm a friend of Hopper's." She shot a thumb back at the small mass gathered around the dining room table.

"Okay," He muttered, shuffling past her. "Well... it was nice meeting you." He joined the others at the kitchen table, his friends giving him hugs and cheers as he approached.

She leaned against the kitchen counter, discerning the group as they ate. Joyce finished up the last of the pancake cooking, kissing her son on the forehead as he approached her. The boys scarfed down their food like wolves, though Mike still seemed slightly distant from the others. Max sipped on a cup of juice, watching the group of tweens as they burst into conversation. Jonathon, Steven, and Nancy were all surprisingly conversing well at the end of the kitchen table. Steve ate his food, explaining what had occurred with the Hargrove kid as he

chewed. Her eyes shifted to Hopper, and he gave her a wink as he sipped his coffee.

Another day had gone by, and by that time Hopper, El, and her had returned to the cabin. Eleven stirred every once in a while, and Naomi had helped to the washroom when she needed it. She stumbled like a drunk man on Christmas eve as she walked to the washroom. She was half awake the next time Naomi helped bathe her, and it was progress from the last time she had cleaned her.

Her body was painted in tiny bruises, her muscles creaked as she walked, but she was improving. She was becoming more conscious and sleeping less and less. Hopper would bring her some sort of easily-edible food, and feed it to her. It was always something like soup, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, crackers, all easy on the stomach and easier for her to eat. She declined food when offered, but Hopper had forced to at least eat something to gain her energy back.

Hopper had taken the next few days off work on a sick leave, which meant that Naomi and him had spent a lot more time together than normally. Another day had passed, and then another. It astounded her that Mike had waited this long to come knocking on their doorstep. She had overheard Hopper establishing rules, and she had heard him say that *he* would be the first one to let him know when she was ready for visitors. Hopper had informed him that it probably wouldn't be for a while, though.

Mike had given Naomi a note before they left that morning, though. He slipped it into her hand discretely, giving her a sly nod as he blocked Hoppers. Naomi chuckled when she unfolded it in the car.

'Please keep the walkie talkie on channel 7. Let me know as soon as she wakes up.' she had obliged to the kid's request. She left the radio underneath Eleven's bed, the dial turned up and channel 7 on. Occasionally she heard Mike say something, though it was staticky from the distance.

'Hey El, it's Mike... just checking if you're awake'

'Hi El, I can't sleep because I'm worried about you'

'Hey El, have a good day. I know you're probably still sleeping and recharging from the gate, but I miss you, and I hope you wake up soon.'

She wasn't surprised when she heard Mike knocking on the door another day later. It was stormy out, the rain pouring. She could hear the drip of the full gutter outside, and she heard Mike's sneakers pitter patter up to the entrance before Hopper was aware of his arrival. It was around seven in the evening when he showed up on the doorsteps. Hopper went quiet when he heard the rapping. Naomi had assured Hopper that it was just Mike at the door, and he obviously hadn't known the secret knock yet. it earned a long sigh out of the Chief.

"How'd you get here, kid? Who told you?" He didn't even greet the boy as he swung the cabin door open.

Mike stood on his tiptoes, peering around the corner. While also dissecting the cabin, he was scanning for Eleven. The dark mop of hair on his head dripped with rain water, and his sneakers squeaked as he shuffled around against the wood.

"I heard you guys talking about it the other night. When you told Jonathon the direction's, remember?" They all thought back to the night the gate was closed.

Hopper peered around the corner, observing the dimly lit forest. He sighed, again, yanking Mike inside the cabin, and shut the door behind him . "Someone could've followed you. You shouldn't have come here."

Mike gave him a shocked look, and the guilt was obvious. It hadn't crossed his mind, the thought of anyone following him. Especially with news of the lab closing down circulating the town.

Hopper groaned, rubbing a hand over his face. "I'm letting you in, but from here on out I make the calls. I let you know when you can come over. Got it?"

Mike nodded fervently, dropping his backpack and removing his shoes. "Is she awake?"

"No."

"Are you kidding me?!" He yelled, to which Hopper shushed him. "She's been asleep for four days," He commented in a quieter tone.

"Yeah," Hopper nodded, leaning past him to latch the number of bolts. "And it could be four more. She's drained. She needs to rest."

Mike glanced at Naomi, like getting a different opinion from another parent. Naomi shrugged. "She wakes occasionally to use the washroom, or eat, but that's about it. Give her some time, Mike."

Mike scratched the back of his head.

Hopper grumbled to himself as trotted back over to the sofa.

"So this is where she's been for the past year?" Mike glanced around the room, observing the small kitchenette, the tiny living room, and Hopper's 'bedroom' which was really just a bed shoved in the corner beside the bookshelf. "Seems a lot smaller than I thought."

Naomi folded her arms, nodding.

"So-"

"No." Hopper cut him off.

"You didn't even hear what I had to say!" Mike threw his hands up in the air like a toddler throwing a tantrum.

"I don't care. No. Leave her to rest."

Mike walked over to him on the couch, standing between him and the tv. "You know, I saw her first that night in the woods! I was the one that found her!" He argued, his hands gesticulating as he spoke. "She leaved in my basement for a week!"

Hopper raised a furrowed brow. "Yeah, kid, and I'm an adult." He stood from the couch, placing his hands on his hips. "Look- I don't have time for this. Either you stay and hang out... without waking her up... or Naomi drives you home in the truck."

"She's not yours!"

"She's not yours either!"

Naomi tried to stifle her laugh by placing a hand over her mouth.

"Yeah! But at least I didn't hide her from her friends for a year and lie to her." He scowled at Hopper, his eyes glowering.

She could sense the anger and the frustration between them, feel the heat that radiated from their bodies. The temperature in the cabin rose, and she could smell their vexed chemosignals.

"You didn't know what's best for her." Hopper barked back

"Neither did you!"

Mike took a step towards Jim, as if it was supposed to threaten him, and Hop chuckled, making the kid only angrier.

Naomi fluttered over to them, startling Mike as he was not used to her abilities, and placed one hand on each of their chests. "She's no one's. She can make decisions for herself. Not now, while she's asleep though. But Mike, you gotta understand that Hopper is her guardian, or whatever you want to call it, now."

Mike grimaced, "Ew! Weird," He fake gagged. "She is not going to start calling you dad, trust me."

That had actually stirred something inside Hop, and she could sense it.

"Hey, shut up." She placed a finger over her lips to quiet him. "If you care about El, you'd be quiet and let her sleep. Got it?" Truth be told, Mike probably was right. Eleven had a lot of trust issues, and to have called her previous guardian Papa, and only be let down by them, would make her feel uncomfortable.

He frowned to himself.

Hopper sat on the couch, folding his arms. His eyes glued back to the television, while Mike wandered off to the kitchen. Naomi shared a

look with Hopper, who just shrugged, earning him an eye roll from Naomi. Naomi paced back over to the kitchen, joining Mike who sat at the wooden side table with two chairs that was their dining area.

He tapped his fingers against the wood, drawing swirl patterns against the grain and towards the knots.

"You just gonna sit here and sulk?" She asked, taking a seat across from him. Her voice was hushed under the sound of the television, in hopes Hopper would give them some privacy.

He shrugged.

Naomi made a face at him, which managed to lighten him up, but his eyes were still distracted by the pattern of the wood.

"I really can't even see her?"

"I don't make the rules, kid."

He shook his head, "Well then I'll wait here until she wakes up."

"And what about your rents, what will they say?"

"Nancy will cover for me! I told her I was coming here."

Naomi rolled her eyes, chuckling to herself, "You don't quit, do ya kid?"

"Not when it comes to El." He responded, "I went a year without seeing her, I'm not waiting any longer."

Naomi shot him a heartfelt smile. "You really care about her, don't you?"

His eyes peered up at her from the table, and he gave her a poignant look. He paused for a few seconds before nodded. It was if he was embarrassed to admit his feelings for her, as if that was confirming his undying love towards the psionic girl. Naomi tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, reveling in the silence between them. Mike's eyes fell to his hands, and he folded his palms together, twirling his thumbs around.

"It broke her damn heart that she couldn't go to the snow ball with you, you know that."

He glanced up at her briefly, before going back to his fidgeting.

Mike shrugged to himself, "Maybe... I don't know. Maybe she could go this year." He waited for her to answer, and when she didn't, he glanced back up. "D-Do you think he would let me take her?"

Naomi smiled, "I'll talk to him."

Naomi was sure that the rival between Mike and Hopper would be going on for possibly the rest of eternity, but Naomi couldn't complain at that, she'd rather see Eleven engulfed in too much love than lack of it. She remembered how she acted when they had to enter Hawkins Lab. She saw the haunted look on her face, she saw the way she tiptoed down the halls, like she'd get caught. When they had passed by a particular room, one Eleven had once told her was the 'bad room' she just stared. There was a crack along the wall, stained blood, and when Naomi went to peer inside of it on the way back, she understood why it was so bad. There was nothing in there. No light bulb. No space. Just a cement 10x10 room with scratches on the inside of the door. Naomi wouldn't ever tell her, but she teared up for the girl that had to live through such nightmarish theatrics courtesy of Dr. Brenner and his team.

Hopper had not let the boy stay that night. He allowed him over for a few hours, even made him a late dinner. When ten o'clock rolled around, he kindly asked that Naomi return him home.

He huffed and puffed, but Naomi managed to sneak him out without the two of them fighting. She drove him home, mostly in silence. His head regarded the road, his eyes glued to the window like it was a movie. He watched the rain downpour outside, and didn't speak a word until they parked the car in the Wheeler's driveway.

"You know, I'm thankful for Hopper." He muttered, without facing her. "If he hadn't found her, who else could've?"

Naomi had promised the boy as soon as she awoke, she'd ring him on the walkie talkie the second her eyelids fluttered open, and truly

open, not just a half asleep Eleven stumbling to empty her bladder.

When two o'clock in the morning rolled around the next day, she reached over and grabbed the receiver.

"Mike?" She pressed the button, waiting for a reply "Mike she's awake." She set the radio down, and greeted Eleven. They shared a long embrace, Naomi hugging her for what seemed like an eternity. They chatted for a few minutes, discussing what else had happened the night of the Gate closing. She informed Eleven of the time lost, and when they had caught up, and Eleven went to wake up Hopper for a quick greeting in the living room, Naomi grabbed the radio again. "Mike, wake the hell up. You told me to tell you when she woke up."

She waited with eagerness, facing the walkie talkie for a few silent seconds.

There was a shift in static, and she heard another voice. *"You're supposed to say over when you're done talking."* It went silent, and then the person added another remark *"Over."*

Naomi rolled her eyes. "I'm not even going to ask why you're awake at this hour, Dustin." She paused, "Over."

"That's better." Dustin commented.

"Dustin?! What are you doing on this channel!"

"You don't own all the channels, Mike! Over." The monotone 'over' that was added after each sentence was comical.

"I'm switching to five, Naomi, and don't follow us Dustin."

Naomi yawned, shaking her head at the young teens over the radio. She turned the dial, clicking it till it read five, and waited for a voice.

"Naomi?"

"Yeah, I'm here. Eleven's talking to Hopper."

It was unnecessary for Mike to press the button and record a noise of

him snorting an annoyed laugh, but he did anyways.

Naomi listened to the couple in the adjacent room, not even having to be supernatural to hear the two conversing.

"You did so good, kid. So good. I'm proud. You saved us all." Hopper muttered to her sleepily.

"Proud?"

"Yeah," He cleared his throat, "It means like- I'm happy. What you did made me happy."

She heard the two of them hugging, Eleven slamming her body into Hoppers, which was something she usually did when she was at a loss for words.

"Thanks, Eleven." They were silent for a long moment, and then Hop spoke again. "Now go let the Wheeler kid know you're awake. I don't want him coming around here again and attracting unwanted visitors."

"Mike was here?" You could hear the eagerness that tainted her voice.

"Yeah."

Nothing more was said. Eleven made her way back into the room, jumping onto the bed.

Naomi handed her the walkie talkie. "I'll go take a bath or something and give you some privacy."

"Eleven?"

She ignored Mike's voice for a moment, and faced Naomi. "Privacy?"

"Yeah," Naomi answered, "I'll give you alone time to talk to him."

"Oh." She licked her bottom lip. "But won't you still be able to hear?" Eleven was starting to pick up and the things that made Naomi abnormal. She was a lot smarter than she appeared.

"I'll try not to listen." While she absolutely loved eavesdropping, she promised she would try her best not to.

"Oh. Okay."

Naomi gave her an awkward wave as she left the room and shut the door.

She knew Hopper hadn't fallen back to sleep, because she couldn't hear the maddening snore that usually shook the cabin. She walked over to the fridge, grabbing a meal from the fridge, and sat back down on the couch, ignoring the dark and using her night vision to navigate. She bit into the bag, sucking it's contents.

"Ew." Hopper commented, "I'm really supposed to sleep now after hearing you drink that?"

Naomi laughed, knowing it would irritate her best friend.

"You're disgusting."

"Just trying to survive, Hop." She shrugged, even though he wouldn't see it.

He sighed. Naomi continued to drink out of the plastic bag, earning grunts and groans from Hopper every now and again, making Naomi only do it more. When she sucked it's contents dry, she placed the empty pouch on the table and reclined herself on the sofa. She would sleep there tonight, and let the two chat until sunrise eventually came.

"So..." He breathed, clearly a subject on his mind. "I was thinking, you know, with how cramped it is here... and how you might like your own bed, or more privacy to yourself."

"Are you kicking me out?" She joked.

"What? No! I'm just saying-" He grumbled, stopping. "You heard me talking to Joyce, didn't you?"

She went silent.

"I hate when you do that!" He responded, taking silence as her answer. "You know I hate it when you do that."

"I can't help it!"

"Well there's no point in explaining the rest." He huffed angrily, rolling over in his bed.

She rolled her eyes to herself/ "Well I'm thankful, nonetheless, and I'd appreciate sleeping elsewhere as oppose to that air mattress... Not that I minded."

He ignored her response. "What else did you hear?"

She cocked a brow, "Was there something I shouldn't have heard?"

"Ah, no. Just wondering, uh, that's all."

She laughed, folding her arms behind her head as a pillow as she shut her eyes.

"I was just thinking with the Winchester's gone and all, you could have a place of your own again, close by... sort of near town." He explained further.

"That'd be great, Hop." She was surprised by herself with the lack of sarcasm or jokes in her reply. "Thank you- I mean it."

"I talked to Joyce, too. She said she can set you up with an interview at Melvald's. You could sort of live-like a normal life, you know? No more running, no more hiding, no more worrying about the Hunters. You wouldn't have to be restricted to the cabin anymore, you could go outside. I want you both to have a meaningful, normal, life. I mean, it would be sort of normal, at least."

This was one of those special moments where she felt so warm and fuzzy in heart, wholly overwhelmed by Hopper's sense of compassion towards others. She couldn't describe how happy he had made her life.

"If you'd like," He added.

She tried to push the thought of Jasper to the back of her brain. It was near impossible though. She knew he was coming, she couldn't deny it. She could almost... feel him. She could sense his presence like people could sense someone watching them. He was near Hawkins, that was what the brothers said. He had to be in Indiana then, right? She knew she would have to go, soon. It broke her heart to know that she may have to leave again. Scratch that. She knew. She knew she would have to go with him. She knew it deep down in her heart. Jasper was starting coven's all over the world, helping them thrive to expand their population. He would want her to join him, to aid and abet. She couldn't say no... How could she? Jasper had the power of compulsion. If he didn't kill the others for her refusing to go with him, he'd make them forget. She couldn't handle that. She'd rather outlive them a thousand times then see them forget her. Sure, maybe it was selfish of her to ensure that Jasper wouldn't compell them to forget Naomi, but she didn't care. She had a family. She had never had a family before, not even when she was young. She finally had it, and she wasn't letting it go. That didn't stop her from whispering three words back to Hopper, though.

"I'd like that."

A/N: Thanks for reading! I have started to write the next chapter, and I'm confirming that Jasper will be in it.

LadyJensen: I'm glad! Then you will enjoy what I have planned for them for the last chapter... Or hate me. Thank you endlessly for reviewing!

Gamby004: Thank you, truly. I find that chapters like the last one are what truly make me feel successful as an aspiring writer. When the ideas are flowing, and I manage to write them down in a way that others can interpret correctly, it makes me feel so happy! I have a plan for Max and El, but I don't think it will be in this book. We will see though! As always, thank you very much for reviewing.

xoxo

25. Chapter 25: I Can Almost See You

She could feel the electricity in the air, the hairs on her forearms erect from the static she felt. Things had been good as of late, she could sense that. Sooner or later though, the scale had to tip. Everything was relatively peaceful as of recently, and she knew that **he** was approaching. She knew that it was too good to be true.

The saying 'If it's too good to be true, it probably is' was etched in her brain as she hugged Hopper in the small rancher that he had graciously gifted to her. They embraced for a long time, his warm breath on her shoulder, pulling her in closer. She could smell the chemosignal that diffused off of him. Joy, pure joy. At any other time in her life, she would be reciprocating the same emotion, but now now. So instead, she faked a smile, curling into his chest as he embraced her small frame. She hugged everyone like it was her last.

They had spent the last day decorating it, gathering supplies and moving around furniture. They had taken some old storage underneath the cabin, and Hopper had some stuff already lying around in the house. Hopper had even stocked up the refrigerator for her, a bountiful of blood bags and some food for human guests that would make their visits. Hopper had said that on Saturdays Eleven would sleep at Naomi's; which worked out well for both of them as that was Hopper's only night shift. It didn't matter though; it wouldn't matter.

It was the calm before the storm. The sky turned tar black, the snow started to blizzard from the clouds, and the post-card perfect life that she was living in would soon be snatched from her by the hands of who she truly feared most in this world.

"Are you okay?" He asked her, his eyes gazing into hers. She felt vulnerable, the way his irises poured into his, his pupils dilating.

She clenched her jaw, avoiding eye contact as she removed herself from his embrace. "Yeah, yeah I'm okay. Thanks Hop. I really appreciate all the help from you and Joyce, and the kids- and thank you so much for..." She spun as she gesticulated with her hands, "All of this."

"That's what we're here for, Nay." He didn't often call her that nickname, but when he did it made her think of her old life, her brother. That nickname used to bring with it regret and bad memories, but now it made her happy coming from his mouth. He brushed his hand on her shoulder gently, startling her. "Are you sure you don't want El and I to stay here, just for the first night?"

She shook her head, forcing a smile. "I'm good, thank you though. I appreciate it."

"You're worrying me," He shot her a playful scowl, "You're never usually this nice to me."

She shrugged, "Change of heart."

His brows raised, and he shrugged back. "Alright, whatever you say, woman. I'll be out for lunch tomorrow, but I'll be expecting my evening coffee when I get back," he joked with her. "Just because you won't be sleeping under the same roof as me, doesn't mean you're off the hook."

She bit her lip playfully. "Okay, okay. Now get outta here, El's probably freezing in the truck." She pushed him out the front door, shoving him harder despite his firm posture.

He snickered again, pausing before she closed the door on him. "You call me if you need anything, alright?"

She rolled her eyes, "Yeah yeah, I got it."

"Goodbye," He waved at her, beaming at her as he turned to the right to trot down the wooden steps. She watched him until he got in his car, and she waved to Eleven and him as they backed out the gravel lot, turning to drive back to the main road.

She sighed once they were out of sight, shutting the door behind her.

She felt her emotions explode out of her like a dam.

She felt her feelings slam into her like she was a victim in a hit and run incident. She felt the growing lump in her throat, the saliva building in her mouth, and prickling in her eyes, but the tears never

came. She couldn't bring herself to release the doorknob, as if that was some sort of metaphoric symbolization of them. Instead, she embraced the buckling of her knees, letting her back guide her to the laminate as she slumped to the floor. Her head fell back against the metal, and she clenched her teeth together.

Numbness filled her first, followed by pain. She clutched at her chest, trying so hard to release the sob that was clawing at her front, but it never came. She tried desperately, as if screaming, or yelling, or crying would give her any sort of release; any comfort. But she couldn't.

It turned out that her efforts to create a new life, a new beginning, didn't really matter. She had to smile, be logical, be empathetic. She had to put on a face and hug her loved ones and act like she wasn't going to disappear the second their eyes lifted from her. She had to pretend, and *god dammit* she hated putting on a face.

She glanced over her bunker one last time, looking from the frames that sat atop the fireplace, filled with familiar faces, and to the stained sofa they had gathered off the side of the highway. She glazed over the patio through kitchen window; noticing the adorable coffee table and patio chairs, with the candle-lit lamp that lit up the forest and small lake that expanded throughout her back yard, and she passed by the small washroom that was tarnished with polished rust. She couldn't even bring herself to look at what was now the guest bedroom, or Eleven's bedroom per say, she just shuffled into her bedroom like a zombie. She removed her paint-swathed pants, peeling off her socks from her damp feet, and jumped into bed.

She stared at the ceiling for a long time, wondering if the tears would come now, or if they would just torment her until she succumbed to exhaustion. Confusion, anger, and shame infiltrated her bones. She thought about not only Eleven and Hopper, but the others as well. Nancy, Jonathon, Joyce, Will, Lucas, Dustin, Max, and Steve...

She tossed and turned between victim and perpetrator.

On one hand, she would have her life ripped from her once again, on another hand, she was ripping herself from the family she had formed, the friendships she had created.

She thought back to the Winchester's, and how her and her friends had actually rid them from her life.

In one moment, you grow tall, wild, and reckless. You're filled with righteousness and scornful assurances, the help of others boosting you higher. In the next, you're shrunk to mere millimeters, being slapped in the face by reality and being smacked in the chest with uncertainty and doubt. She blinked despondently as she made patterns with her minds from the popcorn ceiling. She hated not knowing when she would have to leave, she hated hugging them goodbye and worrying that that would be their last embrace. She felt so lost. She wondered if she would ever be able to cellotape her heart back together.

Eventually, somewhere throughout the night, she learned to welcome the pain that blossomed in her chest, greeting it like an old friend.

When the next day had rolled around, she gathered her things and made her way to the cabin. She made sure to pick up two tightly wrapped presents that she had retrieved from the mall a few days before. Nancy, who she had oddly become closer to, helped her and Eleven shop for a Snow Ball dress. She hadn't told Mike she was going yet, and when they asked Hopper, showing up with a dress they had already bought, he went berzerk. He tried to force them to return it, but they had shopped at a mall a few towns over for Eleven's sake as there were still Hawkins Laboratory employees about. She wrapped a satchel around her body, shoving the duo of gifts into it, and she trotted hastily down the rotten wood that was her front steps.

She hadn't acquired a car, but her feet were just as fast, if not faster; and with the forest so close, she would go unnoticed by unknowing civilians.

She rapped the infamous knock on the front door, waiting for the numerous locks to unhinge, and then opened the door.

"Hey El," She had been using that nickname more frequently, considering the amount of time she had been spending with Mike.

El greeted her with a tight hug, "Hello, Naomi."

She beamed up at her, and Naomi cocked her head. "What's with the smile, lady?" She asked as she moved to the table, placing her satchel on the table.

"Mike and the others are coming over later," She chimed happily.

"Is that so?"

She nodded, "Mhm. All of them." She was practically dancing buy the way she shifted happily from one foot the other.

"Did you ask Hop?" Naomi placed a hand on her hip. "He'll have a fit if Mike shows up unannounced again."

She nodded, "He said to tell Mike, so I told Mike on the radio. Mike is going to tell the others. Hop says he has news for me." Naomi glanced over to the police scanner sitting at the living room table, scowling at it. What on earth was so important that Hopper had invited Eleven's friends over for? Was she going to the snowball, was that it? She tried to shake the conspiracies off, and she moved to the kitchen to place the kettle on the stove.

"So, I brought you something. It's not much... but I just wanted to give it to you now, because it felt right." Naomi mumbled to Eleven, without facing her. She filled the kettle to the line, wiping the leaky faucet after she was done.

"Really?" Eleven slid into the dining room chair. "Why?"

Naomi shrugged as she flicked the gas stove on, analyzing under the rings to see if the blue flame had caught. "Just something I wanted to buy you. It's in my bag."

She heard her shuffle through the bag, sorting it's contents. "Why is there two?"

"One's for Hopper," She proclaimed, moving to the counter top to rest her hands on it, while watching Eleven.

"If it's just something you wanted to buy me, why'd you get him something?"

She shook her head, glaring playfully at the girl. "Just open the damn present. Your's is the red wrapping."

Eleven pulled it closer to her, turning the cube around to survey it. She had never opened presents before. Last Christmas was spent trying to get Eleven back to full speed, and they had a hard enough time explaining what Christmas was to her. They had just spent the night watching movies on television and sipping hot cocoa. This year, she finally understood. She was older, more mature, and she was starting to pick up on things (Like the peculiar reason for giving presents at an obscure time like this). This was Naomi's present to her, in case she wasn't around. If she was, well, she'd buy her another present.

The pads of her fingers grazed over the shiny paper, and she muttered something under her breath. "I've never had a present before." It wasn't for Naomi to hear, but she still did. Naomi gave the girl a sad smile. She was glad she had added the bright blue bow on top of it, now.

"Do I just open it?"

She nodded.

"I don't have to be careful?" She was referencing the wrapping that she was meticulously peeling off.

"Nope," She shook her head, popping the 'p' for emphasis. "Be as messy as you want, kid. It goes in the garbage after."

A smile crept onto her lips, and her previously diligent manners advanced to more reckless ones. She ripped the wrapping off, saving the bow on the side, and she was met with a brown box. She slid her fingers inside the box, peeling open the lid, and she looked inside. "What is it?" Despite not knowing it's contents, her eyes still beamed brightly like a kid would on Christmas morning.

"It's a Polaroid camera," She explained, moving over to the dining table. She picked up the camera, already having loaded it with film, and held it up to Eleven's face. Her eyes peered through the viewfinder, and her finger hovered the button.

"Say cheese!" She exclaimed.

"Why would I say cheese?"

"Just smile," She cut her off.

So Eleven did. She gave her her signature, closed-lipped smirk that was so famously etched into her face, and she folded her hands into her lap.

She jumped at the flash that followed. The photo sheet came scrolling out seconds later, and Naomi retrieved it, waving it in the wind for a moment. She waited for it to dry as it developed and then placed it on the table in front of them.

"What now?"

"You'll see," She answered.

So they waited eagerly, Eleven bobbing up and down as the photo developed. Naomi showed it to her as it appeared, explaining how the camera worked as she went along. She showed her the shutter button, the lens, and she told her how to position the camera for photo taking. She knew that Steve had mentioned Jonathon's expertise in photography, so informed Eleven.

Once the photo developed, she tilted it towards Eleven.

Eleven's eyes went wide as her bottom lip curled up. "Me."

"Yeah," Naomi snorted, "You. I figured you could take pictures, start new memories; since you have your own life now."

Eleven shook her head to rid the curls in her face, and peered up at Naomi. She gave her a friendly smirk before softening her voice, "I love it."

"I'm glad kid." Naomi was suffocated with an embrace, and she returned it after composing herself. "I put tacs in the box as well, they're like little pins you can use to attach them to your wall, you know, above the dresser?"

Naomi was cut off by a loud buzz and the flash of a light. She blinked the brilliance away, and as her eyes readjusted she saw Eleven fiddling with the camera, pulling out a small photopaper from the cartridge. Jeez, that was going to be one hell of a picture that Hopper would no doubt make fun of her for, but she didn't say anything. She just smiled down at the girl who was fiddling in the empty box. She pulled out a few pins, grabbing the two photos, and then skipped over to her bedroom.

She stood on her tiptoes to reach height above the dresser, and she pinned both photos side by side. The one of her face wasn't completely developed yet, but Naomi saw the outline of her double chin, and her eyes flashed a bright beam of red in the photo, something that always happened to her when lights were used in photos. She assumed that when she turned, a tapetum lucidum formed behind her retina, just like dogs or cats were born with,.

"Perfect," She commented, cocking her head as she held her camera in her hands.

"Hey El? Do you think you could keep Hop's present under his bed? I don't want to give it to him quite yet."

She nodded, "Okay."

"I want to save it till Christmas day for him. You remember what day that is, yes?"

She nodded again. "December two five."

"25th," She corrected, shoving her hands in her pocket as she tried to hide her guiltiness. "Yeah."

Eleven didn't question her on it, though. Naomi ran to the living room to grab it, and she gave it to Eleven, who gently placed it underneath her twin bed. She pivoted, trotting back past her, and made her way to the living room.

They watched television for a little bit, Naomi having finished brewing Hopper's coffee, and they chatted a little about Mike and the others. An hour later, Hopper had arrived home. He was clad in

casual wear, unlike his usual uniform he was usually fashioned in. He removed his boots and placed his snow-drenched coat on the hook. Naomi, as well as El, made note of the unusual smile painting on his lips. His lips were hidden under the clusters of beard hair, but it was still recognizable. it wasn't something he did a lot, especially not that brightly.

"Are you okay?" She asked, giving him a condescendingly sarcastic glare as she handed him his warm mug.

"I'm perfect," He chimed, "More than perfect, actually. I was just with Doc Owens."

Naomi licked her lips eagerly, handing him the cup. "And?" She asked. He took it from her, dropping it immediately on the window sill as he pulled out a letter from his back pocket. "And..." He scratched his beard as he pulled out the trifold paper from the envelope. "Eleven is officially Jane Hopper."

Naomi stared at the sheet in front of him.

It was a birth certificate. A certificate with her name, a birth date, and Teresa Ives and Jim Hopper noted as the parents. She inhaled sharply. "Hop! Thats... that's amazing!"

Eleven jumped from the couch. "Does that mean the bad men can't come for me now?"

Hopper gave her a wild smile. "No, Eleven, they can't. This piece of paper declares that I make the rules for you, that you're ours now. Do you understand that? Those doctors can't hurt you no more."

"Really?" She asked, approaching Hopper.

"Really, kid." He threw an arm around her. "And even better, he thinks that one night out won't be so bad. Only one night though, you got that?" He wagged a finger at her.

She twitched excitedly. "I-I can go to the snowball?" he nodded, "With Mike?" He nodded again. "Tomorrow?" Again, he nodded.

She smirked happily again. He did too, and they shared another

embrace. Naomi watched them with folded arms as she served them a pleasant smile, although tainted with dejection. She wondered if they could sense her ambivalent aura. She knew Hopper would; Jim Hopper knew her better than anyone on the entire planet. possibly even better than her own brother did. She tried not to let the contradictory emotions wash over her at a time like this. She cheered for them, and their happiness. They deserved it.

She tried not to let the melancholy sink her down like an anchor as the others arrived. She greeted them all like she would normally, with a longing embrace and a witty remark. She tried to cheer up Max, who still couldn't get through to El. She even went for a stroll with Lucas and Dustin. Dustin had wanted to see how fast she could go, so he hopped on her back like a toddler would on their parent for a piggy back ride, and she flew down the back of the cabin. She had barely made it 10 seconds before he complained, screaming at her to let him go as he announced the bile forming in his throat.

Somehow, they had managed to make it back without him projectile vomiting everywhere, and when she let him stand on his own two feet again, he wobbled. She held him still as Lucas chortled.

"That was *sick*," He had commented after gaining his balance, "and I mean literally."

They had made their way back inside for some hot chocolate and board games. Naomi and Hopper left them too it, venturing off in their own conversation in the kitchen, which they normally did. They always found something to talk about. Every now and again they'd be drawn from it at the voice of Mike trying to teach El how to play the rules. They talked about Eleven for a while, and while Hopper wouldn't admit how happy that sheet of paper in his pocket made him, she could see it on his face.

"Can I give you something?"

Her eyes hot up at him, disregarding the hangnail she was previously picking at on her thumb."

"I-I know that seems like a weird request..." He swallowed, and she could see the visible lump that inched down his throat. "But. Well..."

He sighed, "It's just I have all this stuff from Sarah, stuff that just sits in a drawer and while I haven't learned to forget her, nor will I ever, I have learned to accept that the best I can do is let her live through here," He pounded his chest where his heart lay, and he did it in gentle matter, as if his daughter really was inside of his heart resting peacefully, waiting for her father. "I don't think, as a father, you'll ever really get over the death of your daughter, but I have a reason to at least put those dad skills to good use." He blinked over at Eleven, then back to her. "Anyways... my point is." He trotted over to the junk drawer she had previously found terry Ives' photo in (which seemed like an eternity ago) and he pulled something out. "I think I was just so worried about trying not to replace her, that I kind overlooked the rational explanation, which was that I have two others whom I have to take care of, now. Who are a part of me." He held his hand out to her, and his fingers peeled back like a banana to reveal a small, silver bracelet.

She had no words for him, as he gifted her the tiny chain. It was a light purple amethyst wrapped in wire with a moon pendant in the middle. On the outside, there were little stars throughout the bracelet, encompassing the circumference of her wrist.

"She loved space," Was all he said; making Naomi recall that past night in the truck.

Naomi could sense how much this gesture had meant to him, and she took the bracelet reluctantly. She wrapped a cold arm around his body, and he hugged her side. "Thanks, Hop." She muttered as she analyzed the jewelry even more. She knew thank you wasn't enough, but she didn't know what else to say.

She placed the jewelry on her wrist, and Naomi knew right then that she would never take it off unless someone physically sawed her had off and ripped her from her grasp. There was a stale scent to it, which surprised her. Metal usually didn't hold scents like fabric did, but Hopper had kept it in shape in a tiny jewelry box until that moment. It smelt sweet, like Honey. She debated telling Hopper that, but she decided against it in that moment.

"I'm gonna go for a quick cigarette," She announced a few minutes later, long after their rare, but touching, moment. "You coming?"

He shook his head, "I'm alright, thanks."

She nodded, sliding on a pair of slippers and thin jacket, not that she needed it.

She walked a few meters from the house, placing the cigarette between her lips as she lit it with her infamous red zippo. She watched the snowfall dance around her, dusting the ground lightly with a fresh layer. She swore she could almost hear the snow fall. Why was that? She pondered over that thought as she huffed another puff.

"What is this... Some sort of fucking happy-go-lucky family you've formed?"

Her breathing hitched in her throat at the sound of a stranger's voice behind her. The cigarette fell between her index and middle finger, descending towards the damp earth beneath her slippers.

"Because, let me tell you Naomi, I've been watching them. That's what I do... I hunt. You out of anyone should know that. Right?" He paused. Naomi smothered the butt of the cigarette into wet leaves beneath her. "Do you remember our fun night? Do you remember when I found you in the woods? Do you remember my body hovering over yours? Do you remember my lips? Do you remember when I fed off of you? Bled you near dry?"

She flipped around, sprinting over so scrupulously to him that their noses were mere millimeters apart. "And then you broke every fucking body in my bone and drowned me in a lake."

He shrugged, "Yeah, sorry about that, Love."

Naomi took a step away from him. She analyzed his face. He had grew a neat beard out, a new look for him. His hair was a dark mess atop his proportioned head, and his six foot height loomed over her. It was like a dream, seeing him. A nightmare. She had dreaded the moment she'd see Jasper for so long, and now here he was; standing outside Hopper's cabin a night before the snowball. "Don't you dare touch them. Don't you dare fucking touch them or I swear to God I'll hunt down every last one of your spawns and murder them myself.

You know I'm strong enough for that, at least."

His sneakers started to move, stepping over the piles of snow that had started to gather from the growing snowfall.

"See, this is why I like you, Ms. Cross." He circled her, making her uncomfortable as he gestured with his hands, further proving his statements. "You hate me enough to threaten me, but you respect me enough to realize that I'm stronger than you." He beamed a bright smile, one that caused her to shiver. That smile was thousands of years old, charming women since the beginning of time. It was sadistic, it made her sick to her stomach. It was like seeing roadkill on the side of the highway.

"I don't respect you for shit."

He moved in a blur around her, pressing her against a large cedar tree as his hand went around her neck. "You see..." He hissed, while she struggled in his grasp, "I know you all too well too, Naomi. I know your weakness. I know what will wrack you to your core, what fear keeps you up at night. It's not me..." He tightened his grip, causing her to gasp sharply before her air supply was cut off again. Her legs kicked, and she held both hands around his tricep, clawing it, tugging; trying to create any form of release. A sense of déjà vu washed over her. "It's what I can do," He hissed, his head cocking as he moved his face towards her "I can make them forget. I can tie you up, force them to watch me torture you, and then waltz over to them," His free hand trailed up to her right arm, the pointer finger and the middle finger walking up her hand like a person, "I can look them in the eyes; and I can make them forget your sorry ass ever existed."

He dropped her, allowing Naomi's body to slump to the floor with a light thump. She clawed at her neck, not because she needed air, but because she was in pain. She could see the bruises that formed, and although she knew they would heal quickly she also assumed that it would take a lot longer than usual.

"Or better yet..." He kicked a formation of snow with the toe of his shoe, "I can make them think you're a monster. I can convince them of what you really are."

"Jasp-"

"And what is that, Naomi?" He asked condescendingly, with his hands folded behind his back.

"Jasper please..." She crawled over to him, ignoring the snow that soaked through her sweatpants.

"It's a vampire." He barked at her, glaring down at her like she was some sort of beast.

"I'll do what you want." She tried her hardest not to cry, not to show vulnerability; but she already knew he sensed it. What was the point in holding it in? "Please. Just don't touch them..."

"I was hoping you'd say that." He muttered happily to himself. He pivoted back, stopping in front of her. She gazed at his navy and red sneakers for a long time. She analyzed the expensive embroidery that he probably acquired from some designer in Europe. His fashion sense spoke a lot about him. His personality matched his stuck up exterior, which is why it made it so difficult for others to approach him. He wanted her to do the dirty work. "I'll make you a deal, because frankly, I'm curious about the curly haired girl."

Naomi stood from the ground, wiping the frozen snow off of her pants. She shifted her body to face the window, and she watched as Eleven gave Mike a wide, open-mouthed smile. She threw her arms around him, and she could see Mike's blush start to form on his cheeks as the blood rose. In the foreground, she could see Hopper's back, intently watching the two kids while the others roamed around aimlessly throughout the rest of the cottage.

"What is it." She spat at him, her brows hovering over her eyes as she glowered at him.

He threw her a crooked smirk, tousling his dark hair with his unfolded hand. "You join me, for at least a few months. You do what I say, when I say, and you don't argue. You help me in Europe and Australia for the next little while. You help me expand."

She opened her mouth to speak.

"I get that you have a stupid little vegetarian diet. Trust me, I'm aware. I will try my best not to throw you in the fire, but there may be times you have to kill Naomi."

She shook her head, folding her arms. "What exactly is it that you want, Jasper." She hated the name that escaped her lips. If she killed, she would be the title she so desperately tried to escape since meeting her family. A monster.

"I create, I turn, I help feed, but in return, you have to help wrangle them. I need to expand. After the Winchester's screwed up everything over here, I need to spend a little bit more time where my roots are. You understand?"

"You want me to babysit a bunch of fledglings?" She summed up.

He shrugged, "If that's what you want to call it, sure."

She sighed.

"As my gratitude, I give you my word that you can see them again." He was a man of old-ways, and that was one thing, if not the only thing, she admired about him.

She shook her head in disbelief, "Yeah, when they're old and grey and don't remember me? I know how you work, Jasper."

He shot her another smirk, "Clever girl, you are." He shook his head, refreshing himself to continue his offer. "But, no. I assure you that you will see them again, in a state that they will remember you, prior to their elderly ages. In the next few months, most likely. So what do you say, love?"

She shot him a sullen store, scratching her face with the long sleeves of her shirt. "I don't have a choice."

His smile blossomed, "I'm glad we're on the same page."

She sighed, "Just give me a day, okay? Give me 24 hours. 24 hours and I'm yours, I won't complain, I won't even fight you on it." She held up a hand, placing the other one over her chest. "You have my word."

He licked his lip, biting it as he glowered at her. He watched her for a moment, her hand still raised. His jaw clenched, and he pivoted. "Flight leaves half past midnight. I'll come find you when your times up."

She breathed a sigh of relief. Worry exhaled from her lungs as she saw him walk off into the distance. She glanced back at the window, observing them as they all danced around the room, chatting and laughing with one another. She even saw Hopper smiling. Hop had caught her staring, and he gave her a funny look. He waved her inside, mouthing something along the lines of 'what the hell are you doing?' and then released a confused laugh.

She tried her best to force a smile back, to convince him that everything truly was okay.

It wasn't, though.

It wasn't anywhere damn near being okay.

A/N: Dun dun... DUHHHHHHHHHHHH

gamby004: Glad you liked the last one :) Definitely going to do a few oneshots of what happened in that month. Hope you liked this one!

Thanks for reading

xoxo

26. Chapter 26: Butterflies

She could hear the music from the gymnasium, and she waited silently against the lockers with her arms crossed over her chest and her back against the painted metal. She licked her lips lightly as she tried to drown out Hopper's inspiring voice across the hall. His hands were on El's shoulders, his back turned from her. El faced her, her eyes darting from Hop and back to Naomi. She fiddled with the blue hair tie on her wrist while she listened to Hopper, nodding nervously.

She looked beautiful as ever, so much that Naomi couldn't stop gawking at the girl that had become her little sister. Her hair was groomed neatly, her curls encompassing her oval face. One curl couldn't help but fall on her forehead, reminding Naomi of Clark Kent in a way, but she didn't say anything as El wouldn't have understood the reference. She placed a blue clip on one side to attempt to tame it, but it was relentless. Naomi had painted her with a light application of makeup, courtesy that Nancy lent her, and she even placed a light pink gloss on her lips. They had been getting ready at the cabin earlier. She emerged from the bathroom, her blue dress and pink belt framing her almost magically, as if the dress was made for her. Hopper had stood from her entrance, and he just stared. He said nothing, he just watched her. El had given him a shy smile, and he smiled back. "You look beautiful, Eleven."

"Beautiful." She had repeated the word, but said nothing more. Her smirk grew in pleasure. She slipped on a pair of short heels, again, old ones Nancy had lent her, and they were just about ready to go before El stopped them. "Wait, a photo." She trotted back to her room, her heels clicking against the wooden floorboards, and she came sprinting back with her Polaroid in hand.

"Memories," She muttered.

"Who's gonna take it?" Hopper asked.

Before anyone had a chance to answer, El held her hand outwards from her, while still trying to pose. The camera hovered in the air, levitating a few feet from them, and Naomi and Hopper couldn't help but share a comical look. They both placed an arm around Eleven,

and they did their best to smile, complimenting the masterpiece that was between them. Eleven had taken three photos, insisting that they all needed a "memory" and gifted one to the both of them. They were out the door a few moments later, and Eleven sat in the back with Naomi, who did her best to protect her from the harsh winds and the heating from Hop's truck that blew in her face.

"My stomach hurts," She whispered to Naomi halfway to the school.

Naomi bit her lip, smiling at the girl. "Do you want to turn around?"

"No." She shook her head, her curls bouncing. "No."

"Are you sure?" She teased, knowing that a thessalhydra couldn't stop her from joining Mike at this dance.

She nodded.

Hopper glanced at them in the rearview, an eyebrow raised at their whispering, and Naomi raised a thumbs up back.

"It just feels like the inside of my stomach is being tickled.. like its all swirley." She clutched her abdomen as she tried to find the right words for Naomi to understand.

Naomi tried to hide her chuckle as she smiled at Eleven. "You have butterflies."

"There's butterflies in my stomach?" Her eyes grew wide in panic and confusion, to which Naomi droll-fully shook her head.

"No, kiddo, it's just a figure of speech. It just means your nervous about something. Your stomach gets super sensitive and your brains letting your body know that you're getting anxious about something."

"Oh." Was all she responded with, despondently looking out the window.

"Are you nervous about something?" Naomi tried to elucidate, still attempting to conceal the smile with a lip bite.

"No!" She argued. "No I'm not."

Naomi chuckled, and for a split second, the thought of having to leave her lifted from her brain, and she felt safe again. She laughed with El, or more so at her, and she leaned back against the stained seats of the truck. She took in the smell of the stale cigarette smoke that lingered within the fabric of the seats; and the smell of the cologne that Hopper had tried to cover it up with. She glanced at Eleven, whose eyes were focused on the Hawkins Middle School coming to view. She remembered the last time they were there, in search of an oblivious Mike. Despite how much fighting there was, things almost seemed good then.

It was her turn to talk to her, then. Her turn to give her little sister a pep talk. She was shook from her stupor and she removed herself from the metal lockers.

"I'll be outside," Hopper hiked a thumb behind him, and started shuffling backwards. Naomi nodded.

She turned to Eleven, inhaling deeply through her nostrils. She forced a smile as she faced her, and tried to provide comfort for her while concealing her true feelings of remorse. Eleven was a warm breath of fresh air, to her. How her sweet, kind smile had saved her life. She saw her, and she no longer felt alone. It was like the first breath you took after breaching the water for a long swim. She was a cold breeze on a summer day. She was a warm blanket in the dead of winter. She was more than Naomi could put into words. She tried to think of the situation as 'see you later' instead of goodbye, and truth be told, that was the only thing that kept her facade in front of the girl.

"You'll do great, Eleven. You look beautiful." She assured, squeezing her shoulder.

"But the butterflies," She argues, giving her a concerned look with her doe brown eyes.

She gave her a squeeze, "That's normal. Butterflies are normal. Hell, I get them. It'd be weird if you didn't."

"Do you think he will think I'm pretty?"

It was such a silly question for her to ask, because in Naomi's eyes

she was the most beautiful being she had ever seen. Her purity, her innocence, her originality. Not only in her looks, but in the way she loves everybody and cares from them. In the way she supports her family and friends; fighting for them. In the way that she so blissfully fights with herself, for herself. The way she takes stand for herself, and the way she proves to be innocent and strong makes her beautiful. Sure, maybe it was her relation that granted her those compliments, but while she was also radiant on the inside, she was just as alluring on the outside. She captured your heart when you looked at her, she melted you with one smile. She warmed you with her doe brown eyes, and she encompassed you in love with just her frame

"Don't be silly," Naomi scowled, "He will think you're beautiful, El. There's no doubt in my mind." She glanced to the gymnasium doors, ignoring the pre-teens that stumbled out; chattering and hollering. She could spot Mike from her viewpoint. She saw the way his head dropped, sulking as his feet were placed on top of a chair, tapping relentlessly. He slouched over, his eyes glued to nothing specific. His lips drooped in a dramatically sad pout. "He'd think your beautiful if you showed up in sweatpants and a t-shirt, Eleven, trust me."

"You think so?"

"I know so." She shot down.

"Thanks, Nay." El smiled up at her, making Naomi melt. Eleven had never called her that, but had heard Hopper say it a few times before. It was perfect time, really. The last time her name left her lips was spoken in an endearing nickname. She inhaled sharply, tapping her feet against the laminate. She was growing eager, and Naomi wouldn't hold her back any longer.

"Well, go get him girl." She smiled again, tried to blink back the tears. She wanted to see her grow.. to see her age. She wanted to teach her, and to give her advice. She wanted to be there for her. She wanted to be able to be only a quick drive away. She wanted to have sleepovers on the blow-up, or at Naomi's place. She wanted to teach her about all the girl stuff, like periods and boys and makeup. She wanted to teach her about jealousy, and how being friends with girls like max would be empowering and healthy. She wanted to go for late night

walks, and watch her pig out on Eggo's while she gossiped about Mike.

She wanted a lot of things...

"Don't forget Hopper is picking you up at 11:00pm, no later. Okay?"

"You too, right?"

She nodded, licking her lips as she lied through seethed teeth.
"Right."

"Okay. Thank you for everything," She had given Naomi a tight embrace, and Naomi returned it, savoring the last hug that she would be gifted for a long time. She pressed her face atop of Eleven's hair, and waited for the girl to let go, but she didn't. She let it last, almost like she knew that this hug was different. That this hug needed to be savored.

When she released her, Naomi felt a gust of cold air replace her warmth, and Eleven started to walk away.

She could feel her emotions push her to her boundary, and just as she felt like the dam was about to explode, Eleven pivoted.

"Oh, and Nay?"

"Yeah El?" This time, she felt the butterflies watching her savior about to walk away from her. "I love you. Lots." She wasn't often the first one to say it, and Naomi respected that. With her Lab, and trust issues, she knew that saying something like that made her very vulnerable. That's why it had crushed her so much. That's why a stray tear had managed to escape from her swollen, overflowing eyelids. She ignored Eleven's confusion at the act of sadness.

"I love you too," She responded, her voice quite in the dimly lit halls.

Eleven started back again. Naomi forced herself to turn around, practically fast-walking out of the building. She felt the butterflies in her stomach grow, and as much as she yearned to turn back around, to see her one last time for God knows how long, she forced herself not to; and that was damn harder than fighting the army of

demodogs.

Who was she kidding though... She took one last glance back at her, and watched her as she entered the snowball through the gymnasium doors. Naomi let the waterworks come, then, and under her breath she added one word to her declaration. "Lots..."

A/N: You may be noticing that I'm really trying to drag this on... and I am. Hehe.

Gamby004: loved your long review! Thank you for your kind words. And no, I haven't but sounds right up my alley! I will check it out :)

bookbabe711: I have to say... I'm not to sure. I have this idea of what he looks like in my mind. Almost like Jasper from twilight, maybe, but a lot older looking. I guess that poses the question though...

Who do you imagine as Jasper?

And who as Naomi?

xoxo

27. Chapter 27: Infatuation

"Hey kid, you alright?"

The familiar voice removed her from her daze. Her head still throbbed, her face still felt flushed, and she felt dizzy just looking at him. He tossed his cigarette to the floor, crushing it beneath his boot, and took a cautious step towards her.

"Yeah." She nodded despondently, "I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

She nodded again, gulping a mouthful of saliva down.

"Okay..." He wrapped his arms around her, which made it easier to conceal her emotions from him. She rested against his chest, as she had often done, and instead of hugging back, she just let him embrace her. Because it felt good; because it made her feel loved. It was a momentary salvation from the bitter cruelty that was reality. She could feel the life pumping through his veins, feel the warmth of his liveliness. His bear like form released her, and she felt like pleading to him, begging him to let it last just a little bit longer, to embrace her just a little bit longer. She wanted to feel safe again.

"I love you, Hop." She breathed, barely audible for him to hear.

"I love you too, Naomi." He scratched his beard, readjusting his hat as he scanned over her. "Sure you're okay?"

She blinked back her emotions, faced him for the first time during that conversation, and nodded; biting her lip. "Promise," She whispered, her voice cracking.

"Okay," He didn't believe her, she could tell that much; but he didn't question it. "I'm going to find Joyce, I'll see you around, alright? Don't hover over El too much," He tried to force a laugh, to lighten the serious environment.

"Got it," She gave him a thumbs up, and watched him disappear around the side of the building towards the parking lot. She made her

way through the other portion of the parking lot, shoving her hands in her jacket pockets, and she exhaled deeply, watching the cold mist she expelled swirl around like the breath of a dragon. She wandered aimlessly, silently. She walked around to the back of the building, smiling to herself as she saw the beige car parked with Steve sitting on the hood. His arms were behind head, and his eyes were erected at the sky. One leg was bent upwards while the other hung lazily over the side of the vehicle.

She trotted over, being careful to make no noise, and she watched him from the passenger side for a while.

She watched him move his feet restlessly, watched him stick out his tongue to catch a snowflake, and she watched him close his eyes, relieving in the silence.

"Boo," She muttered comically quiet, pulling herself up on top of the hood.

He stirred at her arrival, and Naomi joined his posture as she got comfortable on the hood of Steve's car.

"Hey," Was what he mustered up.

"Greetings, S." She sighed comfortably as she looked up at the night sky. They didn't say much else, just watched as the flurries of white flakes fell around them. It was nostalgic, in a way. Watching the way the snow floated like a feather onto the car and around them reminded her of last Winter. The silent flakes drifted in the midnight air, and while Steve found himself wiping away the melted liquid, he cocked his head at Naomi having to sweep of the drifts that formed on the peaks of her body. "It doesn't melt," She explained. "My body's too cold."

"Jesus," He frowned, wiping off a small pile she missed on her shoulder opposite from him. "You're something else, aren't you?"

"I am, actually." She answered condescendingly.

He rolled his eyes, laying back down to gaze at the sky again. The watched the snow for a little longer, but she grew impatient and

jittery, and wanted to spend as much quality time with him as possible.

"Come on," She elbowed him, "Let's go for a walk before I become a snow drift, Harrington."

He snorted at her remark, and they removed themselves from the vehicle. Naomi shook the snow off of her, while Steve struggled to keep himself standing with the black ice. She chuckled to herself.

Steve made her feel all warm and fuzzy inside, and she didn't want to use such an elementary term like butterflies... but he gave her butterflies. They met at the boot of the car, and trotted towards the back of the school. Their feet scuttled against the icy cement, and they huddled side-by-side for warmth. Their breath was visible in the air, and Steve tried to tease her by blowing a flurry of snow at her face every so often. She would just glare angrily and threaten to punch him, but a hint of a smile always crept it was up on her lips

"So do you get cold? Or feel warmth?"

She shrugged, causing her left shoulder to bump his right one. "I just feel cold all the time. It doesn't really bug me, or sting, like it does humans. I feel warmth though, and it feels nice." She closed her eyes, smiling slightly as she thought about what human warmth felt like pressed up against her, what it felt like when it was beside her for more than a few seconds for an embrace. She thought about how it was to wear Hopper's jacket, or sleep in the same bed as Eleven. It made her feel like *she* was the one with blood pumping through her veins. "Really nice," She added.

"Hmph." Steve readjusted himself beside her. He shoved his hands deeper into his jacket pockets and started to slow as they neared the opposite side of the school. They advanced towards the side doors, and remained there. The doors gave a look out towards the bleachers in the gymnasium. She took a quick glance inside, but couldn't recognize anyone. Naomi turned to Steve and watched him for a moment. She could sense what was about to happen next, as Steve was easy to read and wasn't actually the smoothest person despite what his high school friends may say. For a moment, she thought about stopping him, about telling him and that even though there

wasn't anything going on between them... there was a little something. She wanted to be selfish though, so she said nothing. She looked away, pretending not to notice as his body crept towards hers. She could feel the warmth come closer and closer, like a steaming pot that's lid had just been removed. He removed his hands from his jacket, and placed one hand on her bicep; giving her chills. His touch was gentle, but it was palpable. He then placed his other arm around her back, giving her waist a soft squeeze, and he pulled her close. "Is this okay?"

"Yes." She didn't reply with a witty remark, she didn't call him a stupid nickname, instead; she just melted into him. Her head rested underneath his, his chin pressed tenderly against hers, and they stood still. His warmth was like a scolding hot stove top compared to hers. Every now and again, he'd brush off the snow that piled on her collar bones, or on her hood. She could feel his hot breath on her head, making her tremble. His jacket was undone halfway, and she could feel the warmth become a few degrees hotter with every layer. He smelt like cheap cologne and fresh laundry, a scent she was quite fond of. The sound of his heart drummed lively in her ears, giving her a sense of peacefulness as oppose to hunger.

She almost felt herself falling asleep, until a thought presented itself into her mind. "How come you're at the middle school dance?" She looked up at him, and he had a smirk on his lips, but he didn't face her.

"I could ask you too-"

"Eleven needed me."

He shrugged embarrassingly, wiping his nose "Dustin didn't want his Mom taking him so I offered to."

She was pleasantly surprised, and she made a face as she lied back down. "That's nice of you."

"Oh shut up," He teased.

She laughed, "No that actually is very nice of you. I'm sure it made him happy."

Again, he shrugged, "Yeah I dunno. Kid's weird."

She laughed, "Yeah but he looks up to you. They all do after that night." They talked about the night of the Gate Closing like it happened years ago, all of them pushed it to the back of their brains, speaking like it had happened so long in the past. Some of them, mainly Will and Eleven; still struggled with some post traumatic stress from it but nobody said anything. Everybody just supported each other.

They reveled in the silence for another long while, and she closed her eyes. A few minutes past with everything unchanging, until she heard his heart skip a beat. She peered up at him, to see his head rotated towards the gymnasium doors. Through the double windows, she saw a smiling face of a young woman in deep wine colored dress with curly hair. She fashioned a pearly white grin while she chatted to Dustin. She recognized that young lady to be Nancy, and a fragile smile formed on Naomi's lips.

"You still care about her lots, hey?"

Steve was startled by her upturned face. "Not like before."

Naomi shrugged, "It's hard not to care about someone like her. She's a special one."

"Yeah," Steve licked his lips, gazing through the windows with intent. "Yeah, she is. Not for me, though." His tone was bittersweet; which made Naomi smile. She didn't want to see him dwelling on Nancy's budding relationship with Jonathon. On the other hand, she could see why Steve was so amazed by her.

She understood, because that's how she felt about Steve.

She was infatuated with him and the way he said things. She could listen to him talk for hours, she could watch him eat and navigate for days. She would be lying if she said that there wasn't an undeniable attraction about him.

Jesus. Was she crushing on him?

Oh God. Was that what was happening?

She looked up at him, and Steve immediately imitated her. "What?" he commented at her sudden movement.

Her eyes went bug eyed, and she scanned his face. She enjoyed being around him, she enjoyed the feeling she got when she first saw him. She enjoyed it when their skin brushed up against one another, and she liked the feeling of being encompassed by him.

"You look like you're going to be sick, what's wrong?" He asked worriedly.

She couldn't be crushing. And why now of all times did she have to realize this? She liked his stupid hair, and his stupid smile. She liked the way he dressed, and the way he didn't make her feel like a freak, even after the whole bus incident. She liked that she could make him feel vulnerable, and him her.

She liked him.

Ah, fuck.

She found herself moving towards him, steadily in a way that caught him off guard, and she smashed her lips against his. He gasped slightly, causing her to smile beneath his lips. Her hands held the side of his face down to her's, and once he figured out what she was doing, he pulled her waist closer to him. Their lips formed together symmetrically, and she felt her body explode with warmth. This was no chaste kiss to distract the hunters; this was a real kiss. Her heart soared as he gripped her waist even tighter, her jacket hiking up slightly. She tasted mint mojito gum on his lips, causing her to smile even more. The kiss deepened, Steve closing the gap, if there was any at all, and pecked her delicate lips a few more times before they removed themselves from the gesture. They remained embraced though, both having smile's plastered to their lips. The blood rose to his cheeks, and Naomi was sure her's would imitate the same if she had any pumping through her veins.

"What was that for?" He asked after catching his breath.

"For everything," She answered, pressing herself into him again. She didn't want this moment to end. She didn't want any of it to end. She

wanted time to stop and to spend the rest of forever encompassed in his warmth.

If only.

A/N: Guys... The big bad Vampire is coming next chapter. I'll probably have two more chapters before this ends! Then I will update you on my plan. I'm trying to stay up with the Duffer Brothers and Shawn Levy's details as they release them. SO far all I knew is that there is a one year time jump.

gamby004: I'm so glad you liked it and thought it was sad! Their relationship was the most important to me throughout writing this fic. Haha I know, I'm going to do a one shot of El and Naomi I think, to discuss that. It would be so cute. I imagine Hopper calling Naomi just screaming HELP, and her showing up with supplies while Eleven's in the bathroom freaking out. Awesome | I will definitely check out your work :) Gregg Sulkin! That's interesting I like it.

KatarinaFoster: That's an interesting pick! He was who I based it off of, if that wasn't obvious with the accent and the old age. Thanks for your review!

xoxo

28. Chapter 28: Devoided

She told Steve she wanted to go for a smoke and grab something from Hopper's car. She had outright lied to him, saying that she'd be back. Truth was, she could see two glowing red eyes along the perimeter of the tree line, which told her 'it was time'. He was early, yes, but maybe that was for the best. There was no point dragging this out longer than she already had.

She let Steve be, giving him a bittersweet kiss on his frozen cheek, and lied about her returning as she started her trek toward the treeline. It seemed almost too easy, the way she escaped from her loved ones without going noticed. She wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. She folded her arms, huffing once as she glanced back at Hawkins Middle School, in some form of adieu. She could feel the prickling behind her eyes and nose, that told her tears would come any second if she let them. She spun back around, clutching her arms closer to herself as she sauntered towards Jasper's whereabouts. Jasper appeared from the trees, grinning to meet her halfway. He was clad in similar cold weather attire, while also fashioning a small briefcase in his right hand. She assumed it held his usual belongings, keys to mansions he owned, luxury cars, etc., Jasper had everything he wanted. Even her, now.

"Naomi!"

Her name hit her like brick to the back of the head. She wanted to ignore it, to keep walking and pretend she couldn't hear him; but she couldn't. She found her feet slowing, her body turning, and she stared blankly at the thick winter boots he wore. It took her a moment before her eyes could trail upwards and meet his face. She stared at the uniformed man walking towards her. He didn't walk all the way towards her, no. He wouldn't be that stupid. He could see Jasper behind her, and Hop didn't need a name tag to know who he was. He could tell by the way he hovered around her, waiting for irritably like an owner would a dog. He stopped a few meters before, graving the most painful look Naomi had ever seen him make. It was as if there was an invisible boundary, between him (with Joyce remaining a few feet behind) and her.

"Naomi," Jasper started, his voice tainted with annoyance.

"Just give me five minutes," She argued, "I'm leaving early with you.. you at least owe me that, right?"

He grumbled.

"That's why you were acting different..." his eyes darted around, his mind gyrating as he worked through everything that had occurred the last few days. "That night at the house, the camera, the hugs, the promises... You knew you were going to leave, didn't you?" He postulated.

Her chin lifted, then lowered; one slow nod to confirm his fears.

His head cocked, his eyes brimming with liquid. "And you didn't tell me?"

She fought back tears of her own, then; but she didn't say anything. Maybe ignoring the problem wasn't the best idea, but it was too late now. It didn't matter anymore. She just waited for the painful experience to be over. She could barely wait to be on that plane. She would sedate herself with drugs and alcohol and she would sleep; because that's when she felt nothing. And when she felt nothing, that's when she felt most numb. How could she tell him? It would've only made things worse. He would understand that once he had a few days to think over it.

Hopper used a plethora of strategies in attempt to get her to stay, to do anything but leave with the sadistic man behind her. His first tactic was anger. It was one that usually didn't work on either of the girls, but it was the only way to express his emotions "You're really just gonna leave her? Going to leave us? After all we've done for each other?"

She stared at him longingly, hoping he would see the pain in her eyes and let her go, to make this bitter goodbye less memorable.

"You'll be back, right?"

She didn't answer.

"You'll be back soon, right?" He enunciated louder, with more emotion.

She shrugged, her vision blurry from the saltwater covering her eyes. "I don't know..." Her voice was barely a whisper, but she couldn't muster the strength to talk any louder. "I'm sorry."

His second tactic was force.

"No- I'm not letting you," He shook his head, spitting a wad of saliva onto the cement. "I'm not letting you leave again."

"Hop-"

"Let's go, love." The accent with the nickname he had for her almost lessened the blow of his words, but it didn't take away from his nature.

"No!" Hopper yelled back. "She's not going. She's staying here, with me. With us. You'll have to go through me if you want to get to her."

That's what she had been most afraid of; interference. She threw her hands up in a frenzy, trying to shield Jasper's coy smirk from him, which only made him angrier. "Is that so, Chief?"

"Shut it, Jasper!

"We took down the demogorgon, the thesselhydra, and a whole army of demodogs. I'm sure we can handle you." He was speaking out of lack of knowledge towards Jasper.

She shook her head, ignoring Hopper and turning to Jasper. "Just give me a few."

He groaned, his head falling back as he let out a loud sound of annoyance.

She turned back to Hopper. She sprinted over to him in a flash, startling his human senses, and she pressed herself close to him. "Don't. Please, don't. Don't stop me, okay?"

He sniffled in, and threw a hand in the air. They were much quieter

now that they were closer. "How can you just expect me to let you go? To watch you walk off with him? Of all people?"

"Please," She begged. "He's different... okay? He's not like me... He can do things. He's stronger. He's an original."

She had him hooked to her words, which meant that he was at least considering what she was saying.

"He can't be killed by a wooden bullet, or a stake. He can only be killed by a white oak stake from a specific tree in the UK. He can do things that I can't, he can compel humans to believe in things. Even bad things... about me. He can make you forget I ever existed, or make you think that I'm a monster." She was speaking so fast she barely had time to exhale. "And I can't live with that, okay? Maybe that's selfish of me... I don't know. But Hopper... Jim..." She never called him by his first name, but this was the time and the place to do so. "I can't live knowing that he made you think that I'm a monster, making you think that I'm a murderer or that I want to hurt you. I will do my best to make it home to you, to her. I will try my damn hardest to stay sane and come back as quickly as I can. I have a purpose now. I realize that. It's Hawkins... It's everyone in Hawkins. I realize that now. Okay?"

It took him a moment to process. He didn't reply. She could see the mouthful of saliva he gulped down, and watched as it bobbed down his throat. "Okay". It was painful 'okay' but it was an 'okay'.

"Okay," She tried to smile, she wasn't even sure if the face she made even remotely resembled a smile but it didn't matter. "Just... Just tell her I'm sorry, and that I had to. Tell her I'll be back."

"But when?" He asked.

Her teeth clenched together as she painfully spat out her reply. "I don't know. I'm sorry..."

The very last tactic was begging.

As she started to walk away from him, he spoke up again. He didn't yell and curse at Jasper this time, in fact he ignored his presence

after their private discussion. His eyes didn't even suspiciously shift in his direction.

"That's what you wanted, right? A family? Well you found one. I found one. Eleven found one. Okay Naomi? We love you. I love you. You're my daughter, my best friend... You belong with us. We'll figure this out. Just don't leave. Don't fucking leave," His teeth gritted together, his jaw clenched, and Naomi could barely believe the tear that stained one of his cheeks. He was crying over her. Jim Hopper even remotely expressing sadness over ANYTHING was astonishing. She wasn't worth it. "Please..."

She said nothing, just stared at him with sad eyes.

There was a long silence that followed, and she could hear The Police's 'Every breath You Take' playing inside the school. She imagined Mike and El swaying innocently together, the happiness buzzing off of them like electricity. She wished she would be home that night to hear all about it. She imagined the others, Lucas and Max, with arms embraced as they danced together. She thought about Will and Dustin, who would be chatting obsessively over dungeons and dragons while swaying to the beat of the songs.

"This is what you wanted, right? To not run anymore?"

Again, she remained silent.

"Then why are you leaving?"

"I have to..." She whispered, her voice breaking with the mucousy saliva that caught in her throat.

He pinched the bridge of his nose, shaking his head as he took a confused step back.

She had to be the one to make the decision this time, she had to walk away now. She had to be the one to step away, to say the last words. She whispered one last 'I'm sorry' and then she spun around. "I'm ready," She breathed to Jasper; who nodded in surprise.

"Yeah?" He double checked.

"DON'T LEAVE!" He screamed, his spit flying and his voice tainted with anger.

"Yes," She nodded.

She heard the protests, then. She even heard Joyce's voice. She could hear her consoling Hopper, hear the struggle between them as Hopper begged to go after her, to bring her back home. It broke her into a million pieces, to see him that way. She couldn't do anything now, though. She wasn't free bird anymore. She belonged to Jasper, and she had to respond to his beck and call from there on out.

She heard Hopper speak once more before they reached the tree line, and Hop knew that Naomi would be listening. His voice was phlegmy and throaty from the tears and the saliva, but he still managed to get the words out. "I can't lose you too..."

Maybe it would've been easier if Jasper made them forget about her.

A/N: For those of you who have read the Vampire Diaries, Jasper is inspired by Klaus if that wasn't obvious! Hence the White Oak and the being an original, etc., One more chapter for this fanfiction... then onto the next one!

gamby004: As always, thank you !

MoonStars: Glad you enjoyed it. Thanks for the feedback!

**Please read and review and let me know your thoughts, or things you would like explained in the last chapter if anything :)
. Thank you!**

xoxo

29. Chapter 29: A Letter

I know you'll fucking hate me for this. I know you will. All I can hope is that you try to understand. Try to understand, that if I didn't go with him; he'd forge monstrous thoughts of me in your brains; and that's worse then forgetting me. I couldn't handle that, Hop, and maybe that's selfish of me. I had to do what I had to do. I don't know how long I'll be gone, but I can't promise it won't be a while.

I wanted to tell you, I really did, but I didn't know how. How would you react? Would you have been more reluctant to let me go? Maybe. But I couldn't ruin El's special night.

Make sure you tell the others I love them, and that I care. Tell them that I had no other choice. Hell, tell them he restrained me and took me away; I don't want them to think I turned my backs on them.

Especially El.

I hate to think that I'll miss her growing up, that she may be a lot different when i return. She will have lots of questions, and I won't be there to answer them.

Tell her I lover her, and that I'll think of her everyday; like I will the rest of you.

You see, Hop, the problem is; you are all my weakness. I never had anyone I truly cared for after my brother was turned. You make me feel human. I never had something for him to leverage with, or to threaten me by, but now I have all of you as a weakness. While I wouldn't change that for the world, it does come with consequences.

He swore to me he would let me see you guys again. The thing is, though, I don't know if you'll want to after everything. You see, Hop, he want's to expand. After the Winchesters' escapade across North America, he lost a lot of his covens. He want's to expand in Europe, Australia. He needs someone to help watch the new vampires, to make sure they are kept on the down low and don't feed on the whole city, exposing us only more to hunters. I'm only doing this because I have no other choice. I understand if you disregard me when I return, though. He's promised to abide by my

'diet' as much as possible but I can't promise he won't make me do things, Hopper.

Maybe it's selfish of me not to force you to forget, but I don't trust him enough to know that he would do just that.

I had to go with him or else I could lose all of you. Do you know what that sounds like to me? It sounds like a void of nothingness; like there truly is no point to continuing on after. I also don't want him to hurt any of you. He has no emotion. He is a reckless sociopath that gets what he wants, when he wants, and I won't let him get to any of you.

Don't you understand that? Don't you understand the undying passion to place yourself in front of others for their protection?

I hope you do understand.

Remember, I love the both of you so damn much, that I would do anything. I'm forever grateful for stumbling upon you two last winter, and

I know now is not the time for demands, but I do have a few requests.

Firstly, love that girl daily. Give whatever care you had towards me, and double it towards her. She needs it. She needs all the support she can get. Parent her, teach her, love her so wholly that you can't breath anymore.

Secondly, ease up on Mike. He loves the girl, for Pete's sake.

*Thirdly... **Don't look for me.***

- Naomi

Hopper held the thin, crumpled letter between the pads of his fingers. It had found its home in his back pocket ever since he had found it. He had read the scribbled cursive over and over, trying to find any secret in her words. He scanned it with his glazed irises, wondering if he had forgotten anything. Maybe if he read it one more time; he'd catch something he didn't find before

The night they came home from the dance, Hopper tried to conceal his emotions in front of Eleven. He let her revel in the amazing night with Mike, with her friends. She ranted about dancing and singing,

and hanging out with the others. he nodded, smiling, and didn't disrupt her as she spoke. When they pulled up to the cabin, he helped remove her coat and he watched her saunter to her room, falling asleep in her dance attire.

When she woke up in the morning, Hopper sat her down at the kitchen table, place both arms on her shoulders, and told her the news. She broke down into tears, as expected. Light sobs escaped her chest, and he comforted her, although he was weeping just as hard inside. She ran to her room, shutting the door behind her and comforted herself. It was a response she often resorted to when she was upset. She liked to be isolated, to process her emotions on her own, and Hop let it happen, and in the meantime he invited Joyce over for coffee. The two of them had gotten closer considering she was the only one that would truly understand; that he could actually talk to about her leaving.

They conversed over the letter, Joyce reading it and handing it back to him while smoking a cigarette on the front porch. "Honest, Hop, I don't think there is much to make of it." She had said. "I think she knew she had to leave, and leaving was better than risking anything with us."

He shook his head, stealing the cigarette from her hands. He brought the smoke to his lips, inhaling as if that had brought some release to his suffering. He wanted to find some secret message in her words, some promise that she'd be back in a few days and everything would be alright.

Things started to normalize after that; as much as they could anyway. The house was wearily empty with her absence, that both him and Eleven tried to ignore. Hopper tried to methodize her name as Jane. Most caught on, but Mike refused to, at least in private anyways. He allowed the group to come over on Wednesday nights, where they played dungeons and dragons, and he was nice enough to allow Mike over an extra day. Saturday afternoon to Saturday evening was a ritual, where only Mike and El spent time reading, watching movies, or playing board games. Around 10:00pm Nancy and Jonathon would pick Mike up, and Eleven would huff, holding him in a tight embrace before Hopper pushed him out the door.

Everything was fine, for the most part. Hopper gave her homework to do throughout the day while he worked. He came home late, they ate dinner together, and then he would read her a story or played an easy board game prior to bed. It was routinely, only it felt off without her. It felt like waiting for a soldier to return from the war. The both of them eye'd the door; like they were expecting her to walk back through any second. None of the others talked about her after they had figured out what happened; they all knew it was too much of a sensitive spot. Hop still payed the rent at the other place, just in case for some reason she would return. He wanted the water to work, the lights to be on, the fire warm. He wanted her to have it all in the slim chance that she would be back anytime soon. And the kid! God damn, the kid. Steve Harrington had lost not one, but two girls now. He would get mad at the mention of her name, he would avoid talking about her like the plague, and he threw out anything that remotely reminded him of her. He was angry.

So just like that; she was gone from their lives.

Christmas had rolled around, which ended up being a happy time for Eleven. They had never really celebrated it last year, but this year Hopper spoiled her with as much as he could afford. She was confused with the idea of opening presents and keeping them. She didn't understand the idea of gift giving. It only made her that much more excited, though.

He watched with a smiling face as Eleven opened her presents in Will's living room. She would shake each box before opening it, leaning over to make to make him guess, to which he would entertain her by guessing something totally unlike the shape she held up "A guitar!" he would say "Oh that's gotta be a tennis racket..." "A basketball," He joked, which earned a chuckle even from Dustin.

A lot of it was clothes that Joyce had helped him shop for. He had also bought her own set of die for dungeons and dragons, and a few card games for them to play. He made her a gift basket of eggo toppings for eggo extravaganzas. He bought her a soft blanket, grey and fluffy in color, which was his favorite present to her, and a few books as well.

It was late morning when Eleven finished. Most of the others had

experienced Christmas morning with their own family and had only come to celebrate with their friends. While the others ran off to the kitchen to start their breakfast feast, Eleven came running up to him.

"Thank you for the presents," She hugged him.

"Santa got them for you,kid," He winked teasingly.

"Thank you." She repeated, smiling.

He wrapped an arm around her small frame and chuckled. "You're welcome El."

She removed herself from his grasp and reached behind her to grab something. She stepped aside to reveal a small box, wrapped neatly with snowman paper.

"What's this?" He asked, making a face. Eleven had already gifted him a bracelet she had made with Nancy, which found a place on his wrist. "It's from her," She said monotone. "She told me to give it to you on December two five."

Hopper stared at the small box in her hands, his mind gyrating at the thoughts of what was inside of it. He knew who 'her' was. The mention of her came as a surprise to him, as they hadn't talked about her in a long while. Eleven handed him the box, and walked off to the kitchen, leaving him alone in the Byers' living room.

A small note was taped to the side of the box. Hop flipped it over to reveal the same cursive handwriting he read every night. "Happy Christmas, Hop. Thought you might need this."

She didn't need to sign it, her swirly letters were as tangible as ever.

He slipped his finger between the wrapping, and tore the piece of tape clean from where she attached the two sides. He flipped open the flaps of the cardboard box and glanced down at the gift inside.

It was a red zippo; her red zippo. It was tainted with memories of them smoking outside while listening to Eleven's tantrums. It was scarred with scratches from her dropping it so much as she flicked the flame open, and closed the lid. He flicked it with his thumb,

pushing down to ignite the flame, and smiled; satisfied, as it ignited. He shut the lid, and examined it more. It was the one she had lit the fireworks with on the fourth of July, the one she had taken a trek across town for to get lighter fluid, even though Hop had insisted on her using a match, but no. She loved this lighter, she wanted lighter fluid for *this* zippo.

There was one other item in the box. He pulled out a small pack of marlboro's and a camel's, his favorite and her's. He dropped the box to the floor, tossing it aside with the wrapping paper, and pulled a camel out of its package. He placed it between his thin lips, the hair from his face scruffing against the paper, and he shoved the packages into his pocket. He walked to the front door, opened it with a small creak, and paced towards the banister of the porch. He leaned against it, watching the snow fall on top of his car as he lit his cigarette, one holding her zippo while the other protected the cigarette from the winter wind.

He breathed in a few puffs of smoke, thinking to himself as he shifted his weight, causing the wood to creak beneath him.

He thought about her, and Eleven. He thought about the way they made him feel, he thought about how they gave him purpose again; how they made him soft. He thought about how he would take a bullet for either of them, and a year and a bit ago he wouldn't do that for anybody.

He snuffed the rest of his cigarette out in the snow and return the zippo to it's new home, his back pocket.

'Don't look for me,' she had written. He thought about those words over and over. When had either one of them listened to each other?

Like hell he wasn't going to look for her. He would search through the ends of earth if he had to to figure out her whereabouts. He was a cop, after all. He couldn't just forget about her. He wouldn't. He would spend every free minute he had away from Eleven, or from work, to look for her. He had vowed to do so in this very moment.

He would look for her, and he would find her; or he would die trying.

The end.

A/N: Thank you all for enduring this journey with me! Thank you for reading, and for commenting, and for all the support. This is not the end though! Stay tuned for more.

xoxo

30. Part 2- Chapter 30: Teenage Wasteland

She sipped her warm lukewarm coffee, holding the cup between her hands for warmth; despite not needing the comforting temperature. The americano was bitter to her lips. Partly given the fact that she never drank or ate anything that humans did, but that's what 'blending in' was all about. She watched as her protege fledglings made there way into the small cafe in Paris, and listened to them as they ordered their drinks.

Scarlett ordered first, the older of the two. "Je vais commander un petit café pour écrémer un sucre." She was speaking the language well, unlike her younger friend Jay, who clearly struggled with his words. Scarlett helped him out, then they both joined her at the small table.

"Good job," She nodded. "Ordering a coffee is easy, though. You're going to have to learn to be around humans without wanting to slaughtering them." She eyed Jay, who paid no attention to drink in his hand. He eyed the fast paced mass that wandered around him, his brown irises hungry for blood. Jay was a young man, no older than 24 in human years. Scarlett was nearing 30. Jasper had turned them both nearly 3 months ago, and she spent her time taking small trips like this out in the open. She would take a few, two or three; max four, and keep them in busy places, normalize them to the scent of other humans so they didn't attack when not needed.

"You have to learn to hold back, to fight the urge." She explained to them as she took another mouthful of caffeine. "The most important thing is blocking out the scent. What if someone trips, splits open a knee or scrapes their palms?"

"We run for them?" Jay smirked.

"No," Naomi growled back, "Unless you want Jasper to stab you in the heart with a giant stake."

He rolled his eyes.

"Don't test him, Jay. He will ruin your existence, make it seem like

you were never even here."

Jay glared back, his hand gripping the side of the glass table. Both Scarlett and Naomi regarded the white knuckles. "Is that why you follow him around like a little puppy?" A brow furrowed.

She could feel her blood boil, as the newbie tested her. She was so done with fledgling temper. It was like babysitting a bunch of blood-thirsty toddlers. She tried her best to keep them closely knit on outings like this, but there was twice when she slipped up, causing a younger fledgling named Heath to get caught. In return, she had to snap his prey's neck; ridding him of existence from the Paris nightlife. She hated Heath for it, because every time she looked in his eyes, she thought about his prey's lifeless body, bleak eyes staring blankly past her. She saw Hopper in those eyes, judging and ridiculed.

"No." She slammed the table with her fist, startling the both of them. She grabbed his hand that was glued to the table and wrapped her hand around his fingers. She squeezed his hand tight as she spoke, feeling the crunch of the bones between her fingers. "I obey him because I have no choice, *Jay*," She spat, "I do what he says because if I don't, he will end me. He has no compassion. He's not like you, or I, or any other vampire. He will destroy us, and replace us faster then you can blink. If you even try to argue with him, you're done. Everything you've worked for, every ounce of human left in you is gone. He can compel people to believe things about you; make those around you think false thoughts." She squeezed tighter, causing him to wince. "Anybody you ever cared about is gone. That includes any family you have left." Her eyes darted to Scarlett, knowing the two had sparked a friendship, "That includes her."

They both shared a fearful look.

"And do me a favor, Jay," She hissed his name through gritted teeth. "Don't fuck with me." She turned his wrist over, breaking the bones between the hand and his arm." He let out a whine, and she scooted her chair back with a loud 'screech'. "Meet back at the nest in an hour. Also, don't wander to far or I'll drag you back with my teeth." She yelled back, without giving any of them a last glance. They both knew vary well not to trial her. They knew she was stronger, they knew she had Jasper behind her (most days at least) See, she liked

Scarlett. Scarlett listened. When it came to Jay, though, she grew aggravated. Jay antagonized her, pushed her to her boundaries. It was unfortunate that they managed to become a package since trans versing.

She trotted down the cobblestone path and watched as the cold mist floated away from the hills. The bustle of humans slowly subsided as the day reached noon. She made a self note not to wander too far, as she could keep an eye on the two, but she also allowed herself enough space to breathe. Times like these were the only time she was allowed to pretend like she wasn't on the same side of the world's possibly most powerful supernatural creature. She sat down on a park bench and pulled out a damp polaroid image. It had seen some wear and tear in the 6 months or so. The edges started to curl in, the paper was warped, but there were still three beautiful smiling faces staring through the lens.

6 months did a lot to change a person. She wondered if the others still thought about her. She knew Hopper and Eleven did, but did Mike or Lucas make a dent in her mind? Did Steve ever reflect on her? She knew the young ones would be taller. They would be nearing high school now. She imagined the group of them going to the movies, all hand in hand except for an exuberant Dustin and a jittery Will. She kept up with Hawkins enough to know that they had built a new mall. She kept tags and was aware that Steve was working in the food court. She imagined him spending his lunch breaks with them while they spent time outside of a board game shop.

Meanwhile, she was left to pick up the pieces of Jasper's fucked up 'family'. She spent most days being his bitch and making sure everyone didn't kill each other. One of her favorite things was helping them after the transition. She was comforting when they first went through everything. She would stay up talking with them, help them with the cravings. She'd explain what they were, why Jasper had done this to them. She would never get over the look of disgust they gave her when she offered them a bag of blood, until they started drinking; and then they couldn't stop. She showed them how to use their powers. She showed them how to listen, how to run. She spent extra time instructing them on how to take away pain, even if

maybe they didn't use it for the best reasons. It was always the longest process. Very few had picked it up, some didn't even care for the ability. It was very important to her, though.

They jumped around from place to place, staying in luxurious hotels. Jasper always had around 20 to 30 at once with him. He trusted a few to leave his side every once in a while. He told them to do the same as he, turn someone and babysit them until they were ready. His expansion process was working, and that feared Naomi more than it comforted her.

The only thing that kept her sane was thinking about Hawkins and when she would return. In fact, she had a return date booked for the following morning, much to her surprise. It was a lot longer than she had wanted to wait, but a lot sooner than she thought would happen, not that she was complaining; but at least she was going to be home again.

Home.

She had been close, once. Two months after her departure, her and Jasper headed from Australia to Indianapolis to go to a Winter Gala. He dressed her in a fancy slim fitting dress, red in color (his favorite on her). He treated her like royalty with expensive jewelry and shoes, which only disgusted her more.

The dress was busty on her, revealing her chest and neck. It was a long sleeve, lace embroidered by her waist. It flew down past her ankles, leaving a small train. He complimented her with a classic tuxedo and a red bow tie. They walked into the gala arm in arm, Naomi still too scared to say anything to him at that point.

Jasper conversed with covens from around the globe. Not only did he converse with vampires, but he also spoke to mundanes that were enjoying the late party. She stood back, quiet. He always kept an arm around her waist, though, introducing her like she was his significant other. She had no idea what the event was for, and Jasper made no effort to tell her. To be frank, she didn't care all that much. She wanted to get back to the coven she had left locked up in a barn in Australia, while Jasper's old friend from Austria watched them.

The rest of the night was spent at the bar, or listening to Jasper discuss population with older gentleman. She could always sense the age of the vampire by the way they spoke to him. All were younger, of course, but much older than herself.

"I presume the repopulating is going well, yes?" the man across from them asked. "It's been fine over here. We haven't reached Canada yet, but that's our next stop." She estimated that this man was along the same line of work as Jasper. He held a glass of champagne in his hand, eyeing Naomi up and down before turning back to Jasper for an answer.

"So far," He responded. "We are headed to Britain next, then we are going to hit up France. We've got about 10 already."

Naomi nursed her drink, leaning against the bar as she watched couples twirl around on the ballroom floor across from her. The event center was decorated with gold and silver, beautiful flowers potted on each table. There were chairs accompanying each dining area, but barely anyone ate as most were of the undead at this gathering.

"10, that's quite low, don't you think?"

"I have no back up," Jasper growled back, earning respect from the younger vampire. "Just me and the Miss', unlike you lot who have each other, at least." He tossed his head back to the group of men and women standing just past him.

"Yes, sorry sir." The man submissively bowed, "I didn't mean it like that."

"What did you mean it like then?" Jasper had a short temper, she had come to realize that.

"My apologies Jasper," He expressed regret. "You're correct. In fact, the number is just perfect for the two of you and I know you'll double it once you hit your next destination." He licked his chapped lips, waiting for the older vampire's response.

Jasper nodded in acceptance, his previous demeanor vanishing faster than fog on a glass. "Thank you Archibald," He tightened his grip on

Naomi's waist. "I sure hope so."

Naomi listened as the music shifted to something slower, more instrumental. She turned to Jasper, who was already looking at her, and she dreaded what she knew was about to come.

"Now if you'll excuse me," He looked back at Archibald as he held out a hand to her, "Ms. Cross and I are going to dance."

She turned back to the boor, guzzling down what was left of the expensive bourbon, and then followed him with gritted teeth to the middle of the dancefloor. They started out slow. He was very old fashioned, having lived through the era of the waltz. He gently placed a cold hand on the fore of her lower back, while the other held her free hand. She placed an arm on his waist, and allowed him to lead in a box step. They flowed smoothly through the mass of couples, twirling and spinning, her train encompassing around them. She counted down the seconds until it was over.

When he sensed her distaste, he pulled her closer with force, which only made her more startled.

"You know the Waltz was created in the 13th century by peasants in Germany. Unless, of course, you are talking about the modern version which was adapted in the 16th century in the suburbs of Vienna and mountain regions of Austria. It was created not for use by folk dancers, but for court." he tried to fascinate her with useless facts as they swam around the room.

"Ah," Was all she responded with.

He sighed. "You know, if you're spending this much time with me the least you could do is play nice."

She furrowed at him, tugging her body further from his so she wasn't so tightly pressed against his chest. "You took me away from my friends and family and barely let me say goodbye. If you think I'm going to play nice, then you can kiss my ass Jasper."

He frowned at that, his eyes turning dark. His lips moved to her ear, and with a hushed voice he whispered; "You're lucky I even let them

go, Naomi, so I'd watch it if I were you."

She shut her mouth after that remark. He tugged at her body, pulling her even closer to the point where she was forced to basically have her head against his chest. He held her in a tight embrace, still moving his feet.

All was silent between them. They spent the next few minutes tossing and turning, his hands still tautly against her frame. Her eyes wandered the ballroom until she caught site of the back of someone's head. She recognized the square head. It was familiar to her. She tried to observe it more, but they span so fast she barely had time to analyze.

The 'someone' was dressed in a dark navy suit, handing out drinks to tables.

She inhaled sharply when she released who the 'someone' was.

The disordered locks of Steve Harrington were practically engraved into her memory. When he turned her way, she heard his heart stop.

The drinks on his tray toppled to the floor, glass tinkling to his feet. The liquid pooled around him but he paid no attention to it as his jaw hung open. His eyes were glued to her gyrating form, and she just watched him. Her head span as she looped around the dance floor, looking at him every chance she he got. Despite his superior's lecturing, Steve was unmoved.

When the song ended, she pulled Jasper. "Come on, let's go."

He frowned at her, "What's your deal, Cross?"

"I'm tired from the jet lag. Let's just get outta here." She persuasively tugged at him, pulling him towards the back exit. "Our flights in a few hours anyways."

"Fine fine," He pushed her away, "Just give me a sec to to bid my farewells." He straightened his tie and walked back over to a group of gentlemen. She ignored what they were conversing over, instead looking back to Steve. She panicked when she no longer saw him standing near the broken glass and stained carpet. Her eyes darted

around, searching for his head of disheveled blonde.

"-she's here."

"You're sure it's her?"

"I'm sure. She's here."

"What's the address?"

"22195 Maple Crescent, it's the Events Center."

"You're in luck Kid, I'm a five minute drive. I'll turn the light's on be there as fast as I can. Stall her."

She didn't know where Steve was, but she could hear him talking to Hop. She waited anxiously for Jasper to finish, and at the same time he started to walk towards her, removing himself from the table, she saw Steve fast-pacing in her direction in the foreground. Both men were approaching her, lucking Jasper being quicker. She grabbed his wrist tautly and pulled them towards the back exit.

"What's the rush, princess?" He turned around, trying to figure out what she was so keen on running from.

When he saw the boy across the room, eyes peeled to them, he knew.
"Ah,"

"Don't, Jasper. Please."

He smirked, pleased that she was so petrified of him.

Luckily he cut her some slack, and he lead the two of them through another hallway, and down a side exit she wasn't even aware that existed. They lost sight of Steve, and they waited patiently in an alleyway as Jasper called back their limousine.

A few anxiety inducing minutes passed, and when she saw the headlights appear, she sighed in relief.

They scurried into the vehicle, Naomi picking up her now muddy train, and shut the door.

He instructed the driver to head to the airport. Naomi would normally complain of Jasper sitting so close to her, but she had no words to exclaim in that moment. The vehicle drove leisurely passed the events center, and she heard the sound of police sirens in the distance. A minute or two passed until she could see the lights, and it was almost haunting as she sat inside the tinted limousine that moved so innocently, while she watched the truck zoom by like a getaway car. Time froze for a long while as she saw an oblivious Hopper speed past, wiping beads of sweat from his forehead as he gripped the steering wheel like a grandma.

She pursed her lips together, folding back into her chair, and she sighed; ignoring any glances from the man next to her.

She was silent for the rest of the night.

She was more than eager to board the lengthy plane ride back to the United States of America, and with all the time she had; she decided to breeze over a game plan. She needed an accomplice... Someone that could have her back, that she could trust when she first arrived back home. She didn't want to tell everyone she had arrived just yet. She didn't want no 'welcome home' party, because to be honest, she didn't deserve to be welcomed back. She needed time to adjust, to observe the others and ponder over the right choice, to see if it was truly okay to enter their lives again. She was being selfish, maybe, but everyone deserved to be a little selfish at times.

She didn't sleep the whole plane ride, despite the red eye, she just sat in her first class seat, excitedly bouncing her knees as she neared home.

She didn't know why out of all houses in Hawkins, she was on the Wheeler's doorstep. She peered down at the comical doormat beneath her combat boots that read "We don't want what you're selling". She was dressed in a tank top and a dark hoodie, charcoal shorts, and Doc Martens. Her hoodie came around her face, and she wore a red ballcap with sunglasses large enough to not only cover her eyes, but most of her face.

She hesitated to ring the doorbell, but pressed her lightly manicured finger on the white button anyways.

"Mike!" She heard an older man call out.

Crap... She was hoping Nancy would answer. Mike wouldn't recognize her, would he?

She heard the footsteps near, and she recognized his twitchy heartbeat. The door unlocked and opened, allowing a gust of warm air to hit her.

"Hi," She spoke, in a fake, low, tone.

"Hi." He muttered back. "Can I help you?"

He was older. Much older. His face was dotted with more freckles, his hair was curlier. She didn't want to gawk for too long. If she did, her involuntary conscious would find itself hugging him tightly, embracing his tall frame. She wanted to tell him she missed him. She wanted to pick him up and never let him go, but she couldn't do that just yet. She had to wait.

"Um, Hello? Did you see the doormat?" He pointed to the floor.

"I'm from Hawkins High-"

"Nancy!" He hollered, his head yelling back as he kept a hand on the door.

"What?!"

"Your friends here!" He screamed back.

She snorted.

Mike turned back to face her and scowled. "Hey you look familiar," He started to analyze her features. "Have I met you before? Are you that chick that works at the game store?"

"Hey!" Nancy appeared in the doorway, booting Mike out of his spot. "Oh." Her expression changed as she looked at Naomi, realizing that

it wasn't her friend from school, nor anyone she recognized for that matter. "Sorry... do I-?"

Naomi snatched Nancy's wrist and pulled her outside.

Mike shot her a funny look, and leisurely shut the door.

"Excuse me!" She started, trying to release her grip "Who the hell-"

Naomi let her hands loose, and pulled her hood down. She removed her sunglasses, and tossed her ball cap on the cement.

Nancy's jaw dropped. "Oh my God."

"Shh-"

"Holy shit."

"Nanc-"

"MIKE!" She screamed for him, her hand preparing to open the front door again.

"Nancy!" She hissed, knowing this would happen. She slapped her hand away from the doorknob and frowned. "Nancy please!"

"What?!" She heard Mike from inside.

Nancy looked at her, bug eyes and jaw agape. She rubbed her hand on her wrist, and Naomi felt bad thinking she might have gripped her too tight. "Tell him never mind," she whispered to Nancy. "Please, Nancy."

Nancy's eyes remained on her, and without moving she yelled back to Mike. "Uhh... never mind Mike!"

"Jeez- whatever." Mike grumbled. "Remember you're driving me to Will's later!" He hollered, his voice fading as he walked away from the front door.

They were left in silence after that; the two of them just staring at each other. Nancy's hair seemed curlier than last time, if that was

even possible. She looked good, healthy. Her cheeks were a vibrant red, and the chemo signals that radiated from her (besides inherent shock) were pure joy.

"What the hell are you doing here? Do the others know you're back? How long are you here for?" She fired off, taking a step towards Naomi.

"Woah woah, one at a time." She licked her lips, shifting her weight. "No one know's I'm here. I literally just got off a flight a few hours ago."

"Flight?" She massaged her hands together. "From where?"

"Paris."

"Paris?!"

"Yeah," Naomi sighed. "Long story. I have no idea how long I have. A few weeks at least, a few months at best."

"Dude!" Nancy spat at her, causing Naomi to 'shh' her, "You were gone for a year."

"I'm aware," Naomi grumbled.

"Why?"

"I had no choice, Nance." She had never been close enough to use that nickname with her, but it felt appropriate, and she knew she was going to be spending a lot of time with her in the upcoming days, given that her plan would come through. "I'll explain everything... I just need a favor. You're more than welcome to say no, too."

Nancy's eyes flickered from the floor and back to her apprehensively. "What is it?"

"I'm not ready to see them yet. I just need a few days to see what they're up to, observe them. I can't just jump back in their lives and pretend I was on a year long hiatus that didn't involve turning people."

"Naomi-"

"Just here me out," She cut her out. "I know what you're going to say. 'they love you, they wanna see you, blah blah blah' but maybe I'm not ready to see them, you know? At least not face to face. It would kill me to just jump back in, knowing that they were surviving perfectly fine without me, and then ditch again when I'm needed."

Nancy sighed. "So what do you want me to do?"

Naomi bit her lip. "I mean... You'll know where they are and stuff. I need someone on the inside. I was thinking I could crash on your floors, if that's okay. I can pay you! If you want." She pulled out a wad of cash, flipping through bills.

"Jesus, Naomi." She pushed her hands away "Where the hell did you get that kind of cash?" She shook her head, leading Naomi to believe the question was rhetorical. "I don't want your money. You're more then welcome to sleep in my room for a few nights, but what happens if Mike finds out?"

"He wont," She assured, "Trust me. I know we don't know each other that well, but you know me well enough to know that I can hear, smell, and sense people coming before the average mundane."

Nancy nodded at that. "So then you're asking me to lie to my brother?"

"Yes." She made a face, "Tell me you haven't lied to your brother before. You guys bicker all the freaking time. Hell, I lied to my brother daily."

"You have a brother?" She sidetracked.

"Had," She corrected, "Twin brother, actually, but that's a story for another time." She shook her head, "Anyways. Please. I can crash at a motel, but like i said I just need to see them without me first. I need to know they're okay."

Nancy folded one arm over her torso, and the other arm rested on it. She ran a thumb nail along her chapped bottom lip, and her eyes dropped to the floor. "I mean of course I'll help you out, Naomi, but

you know the others will be mad if they find out you were here and didn't say anything."

"I know," She nodded, "Trust me, I know but I can't just walk in and out of their lives. I just need a little bit of time..."

Nancy rubbed her temple, squeezing her own side, then turned to Naomi. She breathed a long sigh and then nodded. "Okay, but let me at least tell Jonathon. he'll know somethings up."

"Wow," Naomi smiled, "You two are still going strong, hey?"

She blushed from embarrassment and turned the doorknob. "Just follow me, Mike's in the kitchen I think. I'll tell my dad I'm having you over for a night in case he wanders in later." Naomi nodded. It was an odd choice, but she knew out of all people she could trust Nancy with keeping her secret. She followed closely behind Nancy with her hood up, her ball cap and glasses back on. "I'm having a friend over Dad! She's staying the night." She hollered towards the living room.

"Hmph," Was all that was earned out of Mr. Wheeler. She could see the back of his head, reclined against the lay-z-boy as he zoned into the television across the room.

Her sense of hearing told her that Mrs. Wheeler was upstairs in the bathtub, and Mike was in the kitchen fiddling with something like chips, or cereal. She followed a sneaking Nancy up the staircase and hovered over her as she made her way down to the end of the hallway. Her bedroom was on the right. She opened the door, gesturing for Naomi to step in. Naomi removed her concealing attire, dropping it on the dresser.

She observed her room. Very girly. Her bed was to the right in the center of the room. a large window was across from them, and a dress was immediately by the door. There were torn poster marks still stapled to the wall, and photos taped by her vanity. She saw a few of her and Jonathon, one of Mike from the Snowball, one of her and Steve on Halloween, and lots of a red haired girl with large frames.

She took a moment to imagine what her life would've been like if she grew up normal. She could've attended college after high school, she could've had real friends. She could be human, with a human boyfriend like Steve or Jonathon. She wouldn't have to worry about fighting the urge to feed on others, or worry about Jasper.

Nancy, sensing her despair from dwelling on her normality, pushed her towards the bed. "We can both take the bed, I'm not letting you sleep on the floor. I mean, as long as you don't get hungry or anything."

She turned to see if the girl was serious, and laughed when she saw that she was. "I mean I don't know, been a while since I've eaten anyone." She carefully chose her words as she glared at her with a serious smirk. "I'm just kidding," She chuckled after a few awkward seconds. "Sorry, bad joke. Jeez. You're just like your brother."

Nancy rolled her eyes playfully. "Oh whatever."

Naomi laughed.

Nancy sat beside her on the bed, the two of them at the end just staring at each other. "So what now? Got some spying to do?" She asked.

"Actually I figured I'd do that later tonight," She looked at her clock which read 7:51pm. "So I'm not sure."

"Well," Nancy shot her a devious smile as she stood, "We could do what most girls do at a sleepover."

Naomi grew nervous. Her heart would've skipped a beat if it could've. She massaged her hands in her lap and looked away from Nancy for a moment.

"Oh my God!" Nancy moved into her point of view. "Have you never had a sleepover?"

Naomi was too embarrassed to admit it. She had a faint memory of one as a kid, but she spent a lot of her time taking care of her mother as she was sick and her father wasn't around.

"Well this is going to be great!" Nancy squealed. "We'll do what girls normally do at sleepovers, you know, gossip, nail painting, pillow fight in out underwear, all that cliché stuff."

Naomi swallowed a ball of saliva stuck in her throat as she threw Nancy a perplexed look. God, the two of them really were opposites.

"I was just joking about that last part," She winked. "But for real. I have some pajamas you can wear and we can just relax and pig out on junk food. I can't remember the last time I had a sleepover. When Barb was around maybe?" She pondered to herself. She wandered over to her dresser and pulled out two pairs of silk pajamas. They were similar in style, only one was red and trimmed with lace, while the other was pink.

She tossed the red ones to Naomi, the choice of color very fitting for both of their personalities, and they both changed into their new attire.

Next thing you know, the two of them were cuddled beneath the blankets and having a true sleepover. Naomi and Nancy were listening to a vinyl Naomi hadn't heard before. Nancy had made popcorn for them and brought up two cans of soda, to watch Naomi declined.

"Oh shoot, right." Nancy shook her head. "I forgot... I'm sorry. I mean, is there anything else I can offer you?"

Naomi nearly choked on that, the thought of her offering up a vein or an artery.

"Ah!" She slapped her forehead, "No I didn't mean that. I mean if you really wanted it, sure, but-"

"Stop! Stop," Naomi chuckled, trying to make the most of it. "This is painful." She tried to stifle her laugh, earning a giggle from Nancy. "I'm alright, Nance. I'll stop at the hospital later and stock up. Do you have a cooler or anything, maybe? Just to keep them fresh."

Nancy nodded as she took her spot beside Naomi in bed. "My dad has one in the garage," She muttered between mouthfuls of popcorn. "I'll

grab some ice from the freezer and bring it up tonight.

"Thank you." Naomi gave her a genuine smile. She observed the beautiful girl. Every time she looked at her, she knew why Steve and Jonathon were so in love with her. Her features were so striking, her frame so petite. Her eyes were a striking blue and her smile was contagious. "Thank you, for real. I owe you one" Nancy knew that she was speaking in a more general sense to their situation.

"It's no biggie; but seriously Naomi don't leave it too long."

"I won't, I promise."

Promise. How that word has so much meaning behind it for her, as oppose to the regular being. She had broken so many this time last year.

"They all miss you like crazy, you know." She gave her a sad smile, to which Naomi tried to avoid. "It was tough the first few months. Eleven wouldn't talk about you leaving, not even to Mike. It worried him. He said she just shut down. He actually came to me for advice on her." She shrugged, "Hop too. He took a leave from work. They acted like you... like you had died or something. Everyone acted like they were mourning you. The eventually one day Hopper just exploded. I had never seen him like that. Him and Mike had gotten into an argument over El at the Byers' house, and he just went crazy. He started, cussing, he punched a whole in the wall, he cried. I mean he was literally crying. He just started weeping and sobbing and he dropped to his knees and he kept saying your name, and swearing, and he was talking about how he was going crazy trying to find you." Nancy tucked a lock of brown behind her ear. "I had never seen him like that, or anyone for that matter. I don't even think he remembers. Joyce had to take him to hospital, she thought he was having a psychotic breakdown." Nancy turned to her. "I'm sorry," She gave her a sad smile, "Should I not be telling you this?"

Naomi shook her head, "No no. It helps actually."

Helps me lean more towards my decision of disappearing forever and never reentering their lives she thought. She had been stupid to think a silly letter would tie up loose ends, and to think that Hopper would

actually not look for her. If the rolls were reversed, she would spend every last second trying to find her best friend. The night at the Ball told her that. A memory of Jasper and her in the limo driving by his blaring police truck flashed into her mind.

"Your place, or Hopper's old place rather, is still up and running with heat and light and water. It's like he couldn't bring himself to cut it off, in case you came home. Jonathon said he went by every few weeks to see if you had visited at all. Jonathon said his mom went in there one night, she had a key from when they were renovating, and she said the main living area was a mess. Papers were strewn about, photos of you and Jasper on CCTV. There was a whiteboard with strings and newspaper clippings and all sorts of stuff. Joyce told him it wasn't healthy to keep searching for you, to obsess over your where about. That was the only time Hopper probably ever had yelled at Mrs. Byers. Jonathon said she never brought it up after that, but she would check the place every month to see how often he had been there to keep tabs."

"Holy shit," were the only words she could manage.

"I know, right?" Her brows raised, "And to the others, you were just some sort of echo, a faded memory. They all tried their best to cling onto whatever good thoughts they had about you, to speak about you like you were going to come back. Oh, and Eleven watched every single door like you were going to come back, like you were going to step through and give her a big hug- Oh my God I'm so sorry. I'll stop."

Naomi hadn't noticed the waterworks that were leaking. She wiped her wet cheeks with her hand. "Sorry, no it's fine." The guilt crushed her like a shoe would a bug. Her ribs felt tightly bound and she felt like she couldn't breathe. This was her fault. Her fault. She did this to them. She had made an impact on their lives, and then just walked out. She stood from the bed, trying to expand her diaphragm; to allow some air into her lungs. She paced the room for a bit, before relaxing into a white chair in front of her vanity.

There was silence as Nancy observed Naomi's motions.

Naomi ignored the piercing stare, and regarded the taped to her

mirror. Her eyes couldn't help to lift from the one of Steve and her. She had missed them all, in so many different ways. She had felt guilt and shame towards all of them, but she felt it on another level when it came to Steve.

She had told Steve she would be right back...

"I'm just going to find Hop, grab another cigarette."

"Stuff's terrible for your lungs, Cross!" he joked with her. His heart still thumped passionately from their previous kiss.

"Good thing I'm immortal then, Harrington!" She teased back.

"Yeah well I'm not!" He argued. "You're lucky it's hot, otherwise I'd snatch the whole pack and throw it in the snow."

"Oooooo, rub it in more why don't ya," She muttered sarcastically.

"Yeah, yeah. Go get your damn cigarette. I'll be waiting here when you get back." He shot her a whole hearted smile, when she hadn't seen from Steve before.

She said she would be back.

How long had he waited for her to return? Minutes? Hours?

"Hit him hard too, you know." Nancy nodded towards the photo of them. "He was sad at first, like the rest. he missed a few days of school surprisingly. I tried to go over to his house, cheer him up, but he wouldn't even answer the door. Not even to Dustin. Things changed a few months later when he saw you."

"Ah yes." Naomi sighed. "The Gala."

"Mhm," Nancy nodded. "I don't know what went on, but he was mad about it. He saw you dancing with him, I guess."

Naomi scratched her chin awkwardly. "Yeah..."

"After that he was angry. He said you saw him and ran for it."

"I heard him call Hopper, I couldn't chance both of them seeing me so close to Hawkins. Jasper could've done something to them and I would never forgive myself if anything happened to them. He's an easily irritable man."

"I know," Nancy squeezed Naomi's shoulder reassuringly. "I think he thought it was because of him, though."

"Why would it be because of him?" The thought was so absurd she almost growled the question at Nancy.

"I don't know," She shrugged again, causing a strap of her silk tank to fall. "He just thinks these things. He was so mad after. he wouldn't talk about you, he got mad when anyone brought you up, and he kind of forced himself to forget you. Not really, though. We all know that the short time you spent together meant something to him."

It was odd to be talking about Nancy's ex, to Nancy, but it was also surprisingly normal.

"Hmm." Naomi stood from her spot and walked over to the side of the bed she was previously on. "I should head out quickly, make a few stops." She slipped on her sweater and peeled out of the shorts into her pants. She zipped her boots up and dressed herself in her previous 'sneaky' attire.

"Sounds good," Nancy muttered. "I have to drive Mike anyways. You can use the window when you come back, if you like. There's a sort of vine alongside the house, and just bump the window with your shoulder, its stiff to slide open from the outside."

Naomi opened the window, thanking her before she left. She swung her legs over the windowsill, and leapt from her room to the ground below. She landed on both feet, and gave Nancy a soft wave from down below.

She ran off into the forest adjacent, and she headed towards her first destination.

A/N: Hola I'm back! Just in time for the drop of the trailer for

Season Three! What are your thoughts? And how did you like the first chapter? i made it a long one.

Please review and let me know what you think! Criticism is always welcome, as long as it's constructive.

I will try my best to stall and get out some chapters until July 4th.

Thanks for reading

xoxo